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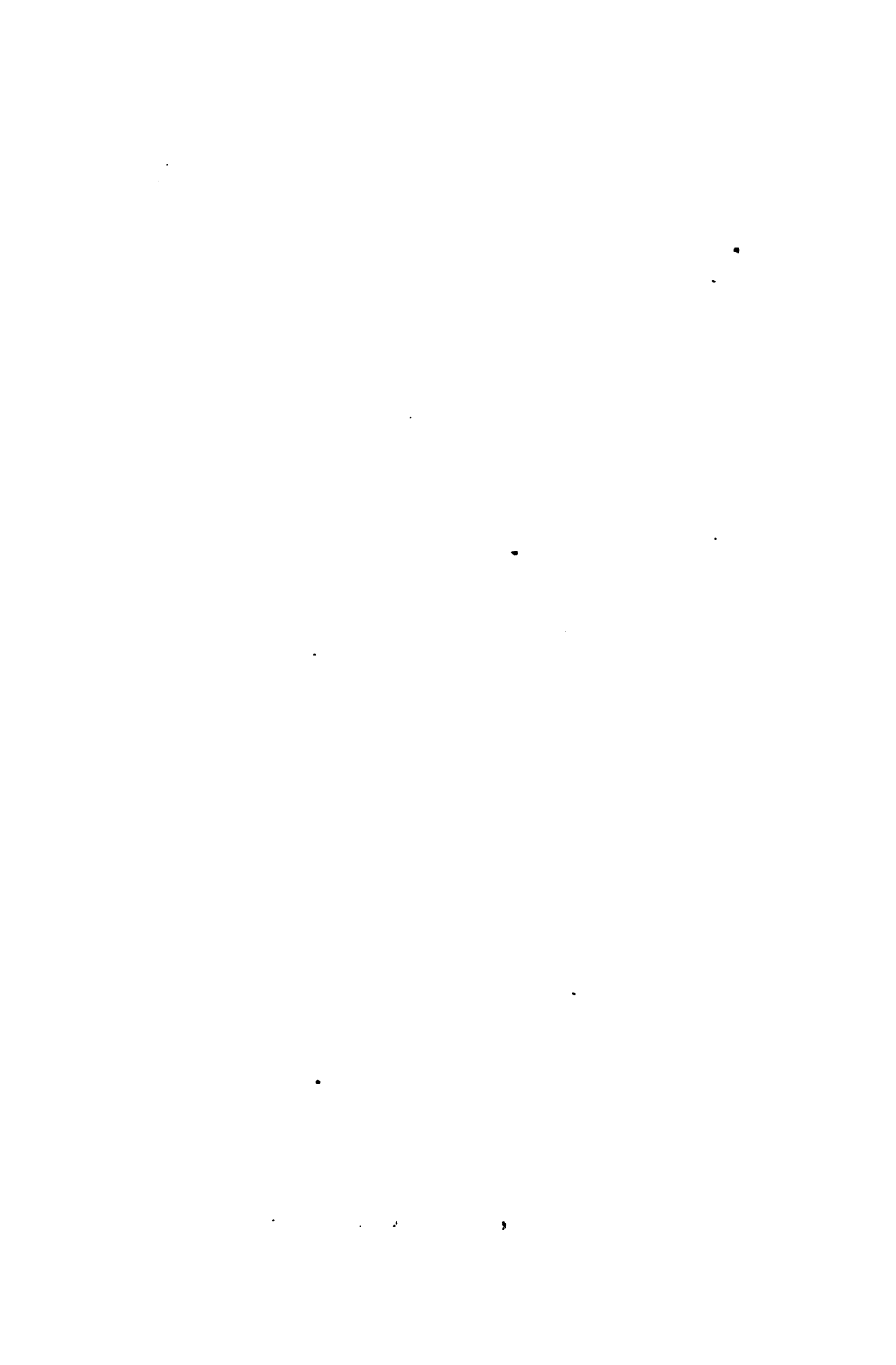


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THE ELEMENTS  
OF  
MORAL SCIENCE.

BY  
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## P R E F A C E.

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IN the "Manual of Theology," recently published, the externals of religion are discussed only so far as they relate to ceremonies and church order. To render that work a complete system of divinity, a supplement is needed on Christian Morals. But, in the ordinary course of instruction, moral philosophy is introduced among the studies of college, and receives the attention of students who never enter a theological school. In agreement with this usage, it has appeared to me better, instead of adding a supplement to the Manual, to prepare a separate work on morals, and adapt it to general use.

In writing the following pages, I have been much indebted to "The Elements of Moral Sci-

ence," by Dr. Wayland, which is a work of high and deserved reputation. Soon after its publication in 1835, it became extensively introduced into the schools and colleges throughout the country; and has been justly esteemed the best text-book extant on the subject. But, with all its excellence, it has imperfections, which twenty-four years of critical examination have sufficed to discover. It omits some useful subjects; some of its reasonings are obscure and inconclusive; and in the following discussions some of its important doctrines are controverted, in both theoretical and practical ethics. A work of the same general character, but not liable to the same objections, has long been desired by many who are engaged in the instruction of youth; and the present volume is an humble attempt to supply the want.

A true system of ethics must necessarily refer to the Bible, the highest standard of morals. I have felt pleasure in making frequent quotations from the sacred volume; and have generally affixed a reference to the chapter and verse, with

the hope that the student may be induced to read the passages in their connection, and by this means acquire increased familiarity with the lively oracles of God. The knowledge and love of the inspired writings furnish the only means on which parents and teachers may rely, for producing in the young the grace of a pure morality.



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# MORAL SCIENCE.

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## DEFINITION.

ETHICS, MORAL SCIENCE, or MORAL PHILOSOPHY, is the science which teaches men their duty. It is called *Moral Philosophy*, because it employs similar reasoning to that which is used in other departments of philosophy.

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## CHAPTER I.

### MORAL QUALITY.

#### SECTION I. IN ACTIONS.

IN teaching men their duty, moral philosophy finds it necessary to investigate the moral quality of human actions. Some actions are right; others wrong. Right and wrong are called moral qualities. In ascribing these qualities to actions, all men concur. This agreement of all men does not make out a mathematical demonstration that the moral quality exists in actions: but it is such a demonstration as the nature of the case admits, and such as we ought to be satisfied with. We

have no higher demonstration that the sun is bright, or that the vegetable world is clothed in green.

The science investigates the moral quality of *human* actions.

Action is sometimes predicated of inanimate bodies. It is a law of physical philosophy, that, to every action of one body upon another, there is an equal and contrary reaction. We speak also of chemical action and chemical agents.

But in all the action of matter, whether in masses or particles, no one either imagines that he finds the moral quality or suspects its existence. Between the movements of a stone and of the human body there may be an agreement in direction, distance, and velocity; but there can be none with respect to moral quality. The movement of the human body may be in violation of moral obligation: but the stone cannot violate moral law, and no one ever charges it with crime. We never attribute the moral quality to any action which does not proceed from mind.

Brutes have minds which manifest their existence and qualities in various modes of action; but we never regard a brute as a moral agent. We may be pleased with its acts; but we are conscious that the pleasure which we feel is not moral approbation. It may do us harm, and, to prevent a repetition of the harm, we may intimidate it with blows; but we never charge it with crime, or punish it as a criminal. Between the acts of a brute, and those of a moral agent, there may be an agreement in many respects; but not in respect of moral quality. A brute may kill its offspring, and a father may murder his child; but the contemplation of the father's crime excites in our minds a moral disgust and loathing which no one feels towards the brute.

Why are brutes not moral agents? They have in-

telligence displaying itself, sometimes to our surprise and admiration, in the selection and employment of suitable means for the accomplishment of their purposes. If mere intelligence created moral obligation, the fox and the elephant would be moral agents to the extent of their sagacity. Brutes have desires and aversions as well as men; and their bodies act under mental influence, as human muscles move under the influence of volition. But something more than intelligence and will is necessary to constitute moral agency. What is that something?

We are conscious of moral approbation and disapprobation in the contemplation of virtues and crimes; but we never imagine that these emotions are felt by a brute. We feel remorse for crimes committed; but no one suspects that pain of this kind ever tortures a brute, even though it may have destroyed its offspring. We feel ourselves impelled to certain actions by a sense of moral obligation; but no one supposes that brutes ever act under such impulse. In all ages and nations a belief has prevailed that there is a God; and that there is a moral government exercised over men by which their actions are rewarded or punished; but no one conceives that this belief has ever found place for a single moment in the mind of any one of the innumerable brute animals that have inhabited the earth. We are conscious of a moral constitution in our minds, adapting them to moral government, and we attribute the like constitution to the minds of our fellow-men; but we never attribute it to the minds of brutes. If we could believe that some one brute were endowed with a mind of moral constitution, we should regard that brute as a moral agent, and call his actions right or wrong. It is, therefore, in the moral constitution of the human mind that the foundation is laid for human

responsibility. It is this which makes man a moral agent, and a proper subject of moral government.

When a child has performed some act which in other persons would be criminal, we may excuse him on the plea that he knows no better : and a child may excuse a brute on the same plea ; but a philosopher sees a wide distinction between the two cases. The brute is not only without the knowledge necessary to accountability, but without any capacity for receiving it. The child may be taught that the act is criminal ; but the brute cannot be taught to make moral distinctions.

If it be asked, what is a moral action ? the answer is, an action which is either right or wrong. If it be asked, by whom may a moral action be performed ? the answer is, by an agent capable of distinguishing between right and wrong.

The moral quality belongs to human conduct throughout its whole course ; and may be detected in omissions to act, as well as in positive actions.

As moral agents, we are bound to employ the active powers with which we are endowed, in doing good. We are not at liberty to waste our days in idleness ; and to neglect any opportunity of doing good is to do wrong. Hence moralists enumerate sins of omission, as well as sins of commission. In the latter we do what God forbids ; in the former we neglect to do what he commands. In reviewing our actions and judging of their criminality, it is not enough to estimate the amount of positive injury which we have inflicted. Every opportunity of serving God or benefiting men ought to be taken into the account ; and if we have suffered any opportunity to pass unimproved, the failure stands justly chargeable against us. What a fearful reckoning, then, awaits us at the last day ! We must give account not only for every idle word, but also for every

idle moment in which we have failed to fulfil our moral obligations.

Our actions are complex, and we cannot affirm that every part of them contains in itself the moral element. We may extend the hand to inflict an injurious blow on a fellow-man; or we may extend it to avert an injurious blow aimed at him by another. The mere extension of the hand in these cases has no other moral quality than that which it derives from the complex action of which it is a part; that is, it has no moral quality in itself. Actions which do not contain the moral element in themselves, are called *indifferent*. Though performed by a moral agent, we cannot affirm that such an action is either right or wrong; but moral agents are responsible for every such action, because it ought to be performed to some good purpose. Hence moral obligation extends over every deed, as well as every moment of life; and this is clearly the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures: "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."<sup>1</sup>

Though intelligence and will are not sufficient of themselves to constitute a moral agent, they are nevertheless necessary to moral action. The action of a machine is not moral, because a machine acts without intelligence and volition. Moral actions proceed from mind and not from mere matter; and to understand the morality of actions we must view them in connection with the mind in which they originate. This connection will be traced in the following section.

#### SECTION II. IN INTENTIONS.

WE sometimes intend acts which we never perform; and, at other times, perform acts which we never in-

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 31.



tended. In these cases the moral quality exists in the intention, and not in the outward action. The nature and propriety of this distinction may be easily illustrated.

A father sees a wild beast about to leap on his child; and, in attempting to shoot the ferocious animal, the bursting of his gun kills the child. Is this father guilty of murder? The unanimous verdict of mankind will acquit him. Why? Because the killing of the child was not intended.

An assassin stabs with intent to kill; but, failing to apply to his dagger the force necessary to take life, he merely opens an internal abscess, and, by this means, prolongs the life which it was his purpose to destroy. How is the morality of his deed to be estimated? Not by the good which he effects, but by the evil which he intended. No one doubts that the Searcher of hearts holds him guilty of murder.

In the cases which have been supposed, the result of the action is entirely different from the intention of the agent. In other cases which may frequently occur, the result and the intention agree in part and differ in part. A man who labors to extricate a whole family from their burning habitation, may succeed in saving a part of them only. A man who aims to take the life of a neighbor whom he hates, may fail of effecting his full intent, but may inflict lasting injury to his person. In all such cases, the measure of the morality is found in the intention, and not in the partial effect produced. If the kindness of a friend does not confer on us all the benefit which he designed, our gratitude to him is measured, not by the good actually received, but by the good intended.

In every case which can be supposed, we may observe that we estimate the morality of an action by the in-

tention of the agent. If his purpose is exactly accomplished, it is a matter of indifference whether we make up our judgment from the intention or from the result; but whenever these differ from each other, we always make the intention the ground of our judgment. Hence, by the common consent of mankind, the moral quality of an action resides in the intention.

Intention implies an exercise of the will. If we act from compulsion, the action is not intended by us, and is not properly our own. Moral agency must be voluntary agency.

Intention implies an exercise of intellect. We distinguish between actions which are intended and actions which are accidental; and the necessity for this distinction arises from the absence of perfect intelligence in the agent. To a being of perfect intelligence, no accidents can happen; and to a being acting without intelligence, everything happens as by accident. Hence, intelligence is necessary to intention, and therefore to moral agency. It is necessary, for the additional reason, that an agent destitute of intelligence, must be incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong.

A moral agent is bound to exercise the intelligence which he possesses. At this point his responsibility may extend beyond the limits of his intention. For an act intended, he is responsible; and the morality of that act exists in the intention.

But accidental actions also have their responsibility, when they arise from criminal carelessness in the agent. He who throws a stone into a crowd, may destroy life without intending it; but he is justly chargeable with the consequences which he ought to have foreseen.

The distinction between sins of omission and of commission, is applicable to intentions, as well as to overt actions. It is not enough that we intend no evil to our

fellow-men. If we pass our lives in self-indulgence, indifferent to the interests and well-being of others, we are guilty of wrong; and that wrong becomes greatly aggravated if our self-indulgence produces mischief to others. The seducer seeks his own gratification, without intending mischief to the victim of his seduction; but he is held responsible by the verdict of mankind for the ruin of reputation and happiness which ensues: and this responsibility he must meet at the last tribunal.

The doctrine that the moral quality of an action resides in the intention of the agent, is liable to be misapplied through an ambiguity in the use of the word *intention*. Besides the outward action, in the performance of which the body is concerned, we may distinguish in the operations of the mind concerning it—1. The conception of the act; 2. The resolution to perform it; and 3. The purpose for which it is performed. The last of these is frequently called the *intention*; and the doctrine has been maintained, that the moral quality of the action resides in it; that is, in the intention with which the action is performed. The argument in support of this opinion, may be stated thus:—

ARGUMENT.—The moral quality does not belong to the external act; for the same external act may be performed by two men, while its moral character is, in the two cases, entirely dissimilar. Nor does it belong to the conception, nor to the resolution to carry that conception into effect; for these can have no other character than that of the action itself. It must, then, reside in the intention.

This argument is fallacious, because the principle assumed at the outset, that “the moral quality does not belong to the external act,” is not universally true. It cannot be true of any but *indifferent* actions. If A. gives money to relieve a family in distress, and B. gives

money to procure the murder of a friend, the act of giving money derives its moral quality from the intention with which it is performed, because it has no moral quality in itself. But if A. steals money to relieve a family in distress, and B. steals money to procure the murder of a friend, the act of stealing money does not derive its moral quality from the intention with which it is done, because it has a moral quality of its own. Its criminality is greatly aggravated when it is performed with murderous intent; but it does not become virtuous when performed with benevolent design. The doctrine that the end sanctifies the means, is inconsistent with sound morality; yet this doctrine is clearly deducible from the argument.

Should an attempt be made to sustain the argument by alleging, that when it denies the existence of moral quality in the external act, it contemplates that act merely as so much muscular motion, in which, considered in itself, there can be neither virtue nor vice,—we admit the premise in this interpretation of it, but we maintain that the inference which the argument draws from it is not in this case legitimate, namely, that the conception of the act and the resolution to perform it, “can have no other character than that of the act itself.” The conception and resolution belong to the mind, and the premise, that moral quality does not belong to matter, will not furnish ground for the conclusion, that moral quality does not belong to mind.

In the analysis of an act, the purpose for which it is performed is not properly an element of the act considered in itself. The purpose respects the end to be accomplished, and belongs to the accomplishment of that end as an ulterior action. The act of giving money is complete in itself, whether performed with benevolent or murderous intention, and the purpose for which it is

performed, is properly an element in the virtuous or criminal action to which the other is made subservient. The doctrine which we are examining, pushes the moral quality out of the particular act which we analyze, and refers it to an ulterior action. If we pursue it, and attempt the analysis of this ulterior action, the doctrine meets us again, and pushes the moral quality into something which is still beyond. Thus it proceeds from link to link along the chain of means and ends, until it has pushed the moral quality out of all human action.

To affirm that the resolution to perform a moral action has no moral quality in it, is to contradict the common sense of mankind. The resolution to perform is the intention to perform; and we have seen that the intention to perform possesses the moral quality, even when the act is never consummated.

The distinction between the intention *to do* an act and the intention *with which* it is done, must be carefully observed, lest we misapply the doctrine that the moral quality resides in the intention.

The moral quality of an action, which is right or wrong, resides in the intention of the agent, that is, in his intention *to do* the act. For actions, which are in themselves indifferent, the agent is held responsible according to the intention *with which* they are done. This intention, which is merely a concomitant of the indifferent action, is an element of the ulterior action. It is the intention *of doing that action*, and contains its moral quality.

### SECTION III. IN DESIRES.

WE have seen that the moral quality may be found in the intention of an agent, even when that intention is never executed; and that it is not in the outward act considered apart from the intention. In every case

right and wrong are, properly speaking, qualities of mental and not of material actions.

When we have ascertained that the moral quality resides in the mind, and have detected its existence in the intentions, the inquiry is suggested whether it exists also in other affections or operations of the mind.

What a man intends to accomplish he desires to accomplish. Intention is commonly the result of deliberation. During the deliberation, conflicting desires struggle within for predominance; and by their conflict the mind is held in suspense. When the decision has been made, and an action has been resolved on, that action is prompted by the prevailing desire which, in its victory over the rest, assumes the form of intention. In this form we have seen that it contains the moral quality. But is this quality confined to the desires which prevail?

If a man intends murder, but fails of his purpose because his weapon disappoints him, we hold him guilty of the murder intended. If, in approaching his intended victim, he finds him armed for self-defence, and abandons his purpose merely through fear of losing his own life, he is still guilty of murder. But let us suppose that, when the desire of taking life was urging him, he foresaw the risk with which the gratification of this desire would be attended, and feared to attempt the deed; is the desire of murder innocent because the desire of self-preservation prevailed over it? No one so judges. We attribute moral quality to desire, as well as to intention; and in this we have the concurrence of the Holy Scriptures. The tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," forbids wrong desire, and does not wait until the desire has ripened into the intention of seizing by violence the thing desired; but it takes cognisance of the desire at its very origin, and

finds the moral quality in it, even when unattended with any hope of gratification. The lusts which are so much condemned in the inspired Word are evil desires in which sinful actions originate. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin."<sup>1</sup> "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have."<sup>2</sup>

Men are prone, in judging themselves, to examine their external actions only; or, at most, their fully formed intentions. With this partial self-examination, Paul for a time was satisfied, and thought himself blameless: but when the commandment came, searching the depths of his heart, his judgment respecting himself was completely changed. The process of discovery he has described in these words:—"I had not known sin, but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."<sup>3</sup>

By the light of the holy law, shining into his heart, he saw the moral quality of sinful desire, and learned his depravity. The teachings of moral philosophy on this point coincide perfectly with those of revelation.

Desires are wrong, when their objects are unlawful. Such are the objects enumerated in the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."<sup>4</sup> It is unlawful to possess the things belonging to our neighbor; and, therefore, it is unlawful to desire them. So it is in every case, where the objects of desire are unlawful.

Desire is wrong, when the degree of it is inordinate. We ought to desire the favor and enjoyment of God

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<sup>1</sup>James i. 15. <sup>2</sup>James iv. 1, 2. <sup>3</sup>Rom. vii. 7. <sup>4</sup>Ex. xx. 17.

above everything else. The pious man, in the holiest breathings of his soul, can exclaim, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."<sup>1</sup> To this supreme desire after God, every other desire should be subordinated. But men are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God; and it is not necessary that the pleasure should be unlawful, to render the inordinate desire sinful. In order to perfect rectitude, every action must conform perfectly to the rule of right; and so must, also, every desire, in respect both of its object and of its intensity. Who that duly considers this, can reject the doctrine of human depravity, or deny that the heart of man is desperately wicked?

The mere conception of an action does not contain the moral quality. The mind of Jesus, when tempted by Satan, had a conception of the sinful deeds which the tempter proposed; but this conception was without sin. No desire to commit a sinful act, or enjoy a sinful indulgence, ever found a momentary residence in his soul. But in a corrupt mind, the conception of sinful deeds is attended with unholy desires, which entertain the conception, and use it unlawfully. In the secret chambers of the soul the imagination feasts on forbidden indulgence, and perpetrates deeds unfit for human eyes. But God sees them, and will bring them into judgment. In these dark caverns of thought men learn to be villains, and practise their deeds of atrocity before they acquire hardihood to act out, in the view of mankind, the wickedness to which they have secretly trained themselves. Let every one who would avoid sin, purify his imagination.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 25.



SECTION IV. NATURE OF THE MORAL  
QUALITY.

WHEN we inquire into the nature of the moral quality, it is important to distinguish between the quality itself, and our notions respecting it. Metaphysicians have been perplexed with the question, How do we obtain a knowledge of the external world? Ordinary men, who have never heard of this question, firmly believe that a world exists around them, and inquire into the nature and operations of surrounding objects, with as much success as if they had fully decided this puzzling question of mental science. Of like character is the question, Whence do we derive our notion of the moral quality? Men who have never thought of this inquiry, meet, examine, and decide questions of duty, without any reference to it; and, for aught that appears, the system of moral science might be complete, if this question respecting the operations of the mind were for ever undecided. Moral philosophy investigates the nature of the moral quality; but our notion respecting the quality, is a subject which falls properly under the examination of the mental philosopher.

The investigations of natural philosophy would be greatly hindered, if they were directed, not to the objects around us, but to our notions respecting them. If driven from the world without us to the world within us, the science would be involved in darkness, and its deductions respecting the relations of physical substances and events would abound with error. The relations of our notions are not identical with the relations of the things known. A spark produces an explosion; but our knowledge of a spark does not produce our knowledge of an explosion. A similar liability to error

attends the methods of investigation which have sometimes been adopted in moral philosophy. The relations between our mental conceptions of moral things, have been mistaken for relations between the things themselves; and conclusions respecting the latter have been drawn from premises which respect the former.

Our first notions of right and wrong, and of moral obligation, are derived from consciousness; but the things themselves exist apart from all our notions respecting them. So the planetary world and all its movements would exist, if there were no astronomers to observe these movements, and investigate the laws by which they are governed. In this objective view we must answer the inquiry respecting the nature of the moral quality.

Our minds are so constituted that we are conscious of approving some actions and disapproving others. The approved actions we call right; and the disapproved wrong.

Though we derive our elementary moral ideas from consciousness, it is nevertheless true, that consciousness does not give us a perfect knowledge of right and wrong. We sometimes approve what subsequent reflection convinces us is wrong; and we thus learn that the distinction between right and wrong is independent of our feelings. The foundation of the distinction will be examined in the chapter on Moral Obligation. The existence of moral obligation being admitted, the meaning of the terms right and wrong becomes determined, and the nature of the moral quality may be contemplated as an objective reality.

An action is right, when it fulfils the obligations of the agent; and wrong, when it violates them. In this statement the action is contemplated apart from the moral approbation or disapprobation which it excites in our

minds. What has been said of actions is equally true of intentions and desires. They are all right or wrong as they agree or disagree with the obligations of the agent. The moral quality in every case consists in agreement or disagreement with moral obligation.

## CHAPTER II.

### MORAL OBLIGATION.

MORAL obligation is expressed in common language by the words *ought* and *duty*. To say that we ought to tell the truth, or that it is our duty to tell the truth, is to say that we are under moral obligation to tell the truth. Such words as *ought* and *duty* are found in all languages; and therefore the men who speak these languages have the ideas which the words express; since, were it otherwise, the words would be as unmeaning as the names of colors are to men born blind. As men of all languages have the idea of moral obligation, either moral obligation exists or nature deceives all mankind.

Our inquiry into the nature of the moral quality, brought us to the conclusion, that an action is right when it conforms to the obligations of the agent, and wrong when it violates them. To pursue our investigations, we must next inquire into the nature and ground of moral obligation. Moral obligation and the distinction between right and wrong have an intimate connection with each other; but if we stop at the present stage of our investigation, it will not be clear whether an action is right because it is obligatory, or is obligatory because it is right; and the nature both of rectitude and obligation will be very imperfectly understood.

Respecting the nature and ground of moral obligation, and of the distinction between right and wrong, various theories have been advanced, which it will be useful to examine.

## SECTION I. THEORIES EXAMINED.

**THEORY 1.** Nature impels every man to seek his own happiness, and the innate tendency demonstrates that happiness is the end of his being. Hence self-love, which prompts each man to seek his own happiness, is the proper motive of human conduct. The desire of present pleasure may be gratified at the expense of our future good; and hence self-love, which seeks our happiness on the whole, may forbid the present gratification. This restraint on appetites and passions which call for present indulgence, is moral obligation. He who so acts as to promote his own happiness in the highest degree, acts virtuously, and deserves praise. In estimating our happiness on the whole, we must take our future immortality into the account; and in obeying God, or doing good to men, the proper motive of our actions, is the desire of future happiness. In human society individuals are so related to each other, and so dependent on each other, that each one in seeking his own happiness, is compelled to promote the happiness of others. Hence self-love requires the exercise of the social affections, and obtains pleasure from the exercise. Moreover, some actions are reviewed with pleasurable self-approbation, and others with painful remorse; and self-love takes the consequences of actions into the account, in determining what actions are right. If every individual would diligently and wisely seek his own happiness, the highest happiness of each would be attained, and the aggregate of happiness in the world would be the greatest possible. Hence self-love tends to the general good.

If we would learn the proper end of man's being, and the proper motive of his actions, from the tendencies observable in his nature, we ought to draw our knowledge, not from a single tendency, but from his entire nature. The theory under consideration fixes on the single tendency to the seeking of happiness; and from this draws all its conclusions. But there are other tendencies which equally claim our consideration;

and which must be taken into the account if we would judge correctly concerning the end for which man exists, and to the accomplishment of which his actions should be directed. He who sympathizes with a friend in affliction does not sympathize for the sake of his own happiness. The mother who denies herself every comfort, that she may watch at the cradle of her sick infant, and who weeps with broken heart when death has taken it from her, does not watch and weep for the sake of her own happiness. When we review a past action with remorse, we do not make the review, or indulge the painful emotion which it produces, for the sake of our own happiness. If happiness is the only end of man, why do sympathy, maternal affection, and remorse give pain; or why is the human heart capable of these affections?

To satisfy the tendencies of our nature, and to gratify our desire of pleasure, are things which every careful observer may readily learn to distinguish. The appetite for food is a natural tendency on which life depends. The benevolence of the Creator has made the satisfying of this tendency a source of pleasure. We may satisfy the demands of appetite by eating food which gives very little pleasure to the taste; and we may eat for the sake of pleasure when the demands of appetite have ceased. Our happiness is the aggregate of our pleasures; but if our good, or the end for which we exist, be the satisfaction of all the tendencies in our nature, it is clear that happiness is only a part of that good. Hence the theory errs in reasoning from a part as if it were the whole.

When two tendencies of our nature come into conflict with each other, how shall it be decided which of them is under moral obligation to yield? Ought the mother to satisfy the demands of maternal affection by

painful attendance on her sick infant; or ought she to neglect it for the pleasure of a banquet? There is in human nature a tendency to decide this question, as every mother will decide it, who is not without natural affection; and this tendency the theory overlooks. The moral judgments of mankind are not formed by its rule. It assumes that the desire of happiness, on the whole, ought to prevail over the desire of present gratification; but the assumption is arbitrary, if we judge merely from a comparison of the two impulses. The assumption chances to be right in this case: but because self-love ought to control the desire of present gratification, it does not follow that it ought to govern every other impulse and tendency of our nature.

We know that hunger tends to personal good, by driving men to obtain sustenance for the body; and we know, with equal certainty, that there are impulses in our nature which tend to the good of others. We are formed for society; and we have tendencies manifestly directed to the good of society. Our philosophy is false to nature when it assumes that every man ought to live for himself. The theory, therefore, errs: first, in making all good consist in happiness; and secondly, in making the good which every individual ought to seek personal.

The theory contradicts the moral judgments of mankind. All the world reprobate the man who seeks to promote his own happiness by cruelty, fraud, and falsehood: but the theory justifies him. It may indeed admit that he adopts an unwise method to promote his happiness, because it will fail to attain the end which he seeks: but what the theory condemns, is, not the motive, but the mistaken judgment. The selfish motive it justifies; and the cruelty, fraud, and falsehood it would justify, if these could promote the man's happi-

ness: but the moral judgments of mankind decide against the theory.

If it be said that conscience will not permit us to be happy in the practice of cruelty, falsehood, and fraud, and that self-love, aware of this, avoids these practices so inconsistent with our internal peace, it is clearly admitted that conscience is a higher principle of our nature, to the decisions of which our self-love is compelled to yield.

The doctrine that the happiness of all beings is best promoted, when each seeks directly to promote his own, is fallacious. If the happiness of each grew up entirely from within himself, it might be that the aggregate of happiness would be greatest when each cultivated exclusively the nearest spot; but our enjoyments come in great measure from without; and, in dividing the means of enjoyment, the theory justifies every man in seizing the most that he can. It puts every individual in conflict with every other; and makes war the natural state of society. A universe of beings at war each with every other, and a universe of beings who love each other as they love themselves—in which of these shall we look for the greatest amount of happiness? To secure the greatest happiness of a whole life, the impulse which seeks the highest enjoyment of each moment, needs restraint; and equally to secure the highest happiness of the world, the impulse which seeks the highest happiness of each individual, must be in subjection. The theory admits the former necessity, but overlooks the latter.

Since supreme self-love does not obtain the approbation of men, much less can it secure the favor of God. A man may pray, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;" but the mere desire of future happiness, however intense and



active, will not suffice. God is not obeyed by morality which proceeds from no higher motive.

THEORY 2.—The perception of external things is frequently followed by vivid feelings in the perceiving mind, which are called emotions—such as sorrow, hope, fear, desire, aversion, &c. These emotions are not qualities of the external object; and they give us no other knowledge of it, than that it is capable, when perceived, of exciting the mental emotion. By consciousness, we have knowledge of our emotions, and are able to classify them. One class, distinct from all others, consists of approbation in the view of right actions, and disapprobation in the view of wrong actions. These emotions give us our only notion of the moral quality in actions. As sugar is sweet, because of the peculiar sensation which it produces, so actions are right, because of the peculiar emotion which they excite.

The error of this theory is, that it regards the moral quality as merely relative to the mind in which it excites approbation or disapprobation. To determine whether sugar is sweet, we do not employ a process of reasoning, or apply chemical tests; but we judge by the taste—and from the taste there is no appeal. But in judging of the moral quality, men reason, and compare the action with some rule of duty, some conception which their minds entertain of moral obligation in general, and of the agent's obligation in particular. As all men proceed thus, when they carefully investigate the moral quality of actions, we have the common-sense verdict of all men against the opinion, that the moral quality is merely relative to the moral taste of each individual.

If morality is dependent on the moral taste of each individual, it can have no fixed principles; and it would be possible for right and wrong wholly to interchange places, in systems of morality adapted to different beings, just as food is delicious to some animals, which is loath-

some to others. It would be possible for a race of creatures to exist, among whom lying, fraud, cruelty, and blasphemy would be eminent virtues; and their opposites, detestable vices. Important differences of opinion respecting the morality of actions, actually exist among men; and, according to the theory, each opinion is equally good. What one man approves, another disapproves; and the judgment of each is correct, because it conforms to the proper standard, the peculiar taste of each.

Men are generally agreed that sugar is sweet, and wormwood bitter; but if any individual should so differ from the rest of mankind, as to think otherwise, he would be left to his peculiarity undisturbed. But if some individual in human society should think it right to steal and commit murder, public opinion and the laws would judge of his conduct, not by his peculiar moral taste, but by fixed principles which they recognise.

Improvement and deterioration in virtue, are universally admitted to be possible. The moral taste of some men becomes greatly refined: they discriminate between right and wrong with greater promptness and accuracy; and learn to correct erroneous judgments previously formed. On the other hand, some men become so hardened in vice, as to be almost incapable of moral feeling. But, according to the theory, in all this progress, whether upward or downward, the standard of right varies with the state of the mind, and rises or falls with the ascent or descent of the individual. The virtuous man does not really become more virtuous; and the moral judgment which he has changed, was right before it was changed—and is now equally right, though it has been reversed. The vicious man, in like manner, does not become really more vicious, if his

moral taste lowers with his downward progress; and when he ceases to disapprove vice, he becomes perfectly virtuous.

**THEORY 3.**—The moral quality is an elementary property which the mind intuitively perceives in actions, as the eye sees colors. Being elementary, it cannot be reduced to other more general properties, and cannot be defined except by describing the circumstances in which it may be observed. The color *green* may be pleasant and useful to the eyes, but pleasure and utility are not greenness itself. So the moral quality of a good action may excite the pleasurable emotion of approbation, and may otherwise promote happiness, but these effects do not constitute the quality itself, or adequately describe it. If asked what *green* is, we tell the inquirer where he may see it, and our labor of instruction is ended. If asked what *moral rectitude* is, we refer the inquirer to the actions which contain the quality. He may there see it for himself, and be as fully assured of its existence as he is that the colors exist which his eyes behold; but except by direct intuition, the knowledge of it is impossible.

The advocates of this theory differ among themselves, with respect to the mental faculty by which the moral quality is immediately perceived. Some suppose that it is perceived by an intuitive act of reason; others, that it is perceived by a peculiar sense which they call *the moral sense*. To the latter opinion it has been objected, that it makes the moral quality relative to the sense, and therefore involves all the difficulties and absurdities chargeable on the last theory; but this objection is not necessarily applicable. Our senses give us what knowledge we possess of absolute as well as of relative properties in external objects; and it will not follow, if we obtain our knowledge of the moral quality by a sense, that the quality itself is merely relative to that sense. We shall therefore understand the present

theory to admit fully the absolute existence of the moral quality.

An objection fatal to the theory is, that it allows no place for reasoning in the ascertainment of duty. Perplexing cases of conscience often cost us laborious study; controversies respecting right give occasion for tedious litigations; the discussions of courts and legislatures to determine the right, call forth the utmost efforts of the ablest logicians; and volumes have been written on law and moral science; but all this is a useless waste of mental energy if the moral quality is immediately perceived by intuition. Such labor is never employed to convince ourselves or others, that grass is green; or to settle a controversy on the question whether it is green or blue. Moreover, if moral knowledge is by intuition, ignorant and savage men possess it, and may decide moral problems with as much readiness and success as the learned and civilized; and high moral cultivation is impossible. A doctrine which renders improvement in moral science impossible, and annihilates the science itself, must be rejected.

An opinion bearing some analogy to the theory under consideration, supposes that intellect discovers to us our various relations to other beings; that the moral sense intuitively perceives the obligations corresponding to these relations; and that intellect again comes in to determine what actions are necessary to fulfil the obligations. But this opinion subverts the essential part of the theory, by denying that the moral quality is intuitively perceived in the actions. Under the erring guidance of reason, we may attempt to fulfil an obligation by a wrong action, which therefore appears to us right; and hence the moral quality is not intuitively perceived. Moreover, if reason should err in the discovery of our relations, the obligations which we perceive are not

those which really exist, and the actions which fulfil them are not our true duty. Furthermore, the mere knowledge of our relation to an individual is not all that is necessary to determine our obligations to him. Paul teaches children to obey their parents, not merely because of the relation subsisting between them, but because it is "well pleasing unto the Lord."<sup>1</sup> And he exhorts servants to obey their masters, not merely because of the relation, but "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed."<sup>2</sup> We act under ever-abiding relations to the universe of beings, and from every action consequences may emanate of boundless influence. All the relations and consequences must be in full view, in order to a perfect knowledge of our obligations. How little, then, of this knowledge is obtained by mere intuition !

**THEORY 4.**—Virtue tends to universal happiness; and the agent is virtuous who intentionally promotes universal happiness. Between two courses of conduct, we are under moral obligation always to choose that which will conduce most to universal good; and hence general utility is the foundation of moral obligation.

This theory has much to recommend it. No one will deny that virtue tends to produce universal happiness; or that in general this tendency of an action determines it to be virtuous. The Scriptures declare that "love is the fulfilling of the law;"<sup>3</sup> and that "God is love."<sup>4</sup> These declarations of inspired truth appear to teach, that all the moral obligations of men, and all the moral perfections of God, may be comprehended in the single word *love*. The advocates of this theory, beautiful for its simplicity, maintain that God's justice is merely a modification of his benevolence; and that the punish-

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<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 20. <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 1. <sup>3</sup> Rom. xiii. 10. <sup>4</sup> 1 John iv. 8.

ment of the wicked produces a greater amount of happiness in the universe than could exist if they were permitted to escape the penalty due to their crimes.

But the theory is incapable of being proved. It cannot be demonstrated that happiness is the only ultimate good. In discussing Theory 1, it was shown that the happiness of an individual is not his only good; and we may argue from analogy, that, contemplating the whole creation collectively as one being, its happiness is not its only good. Every man who is compelled to choose between duty and enjoyment, opposes the will of God if he does not prefer holiness to happiness; and if all creation could make the choice whether to be holy or happy, we cannot doubt which choice would accord with the will of God. God himself is perfectly holy, and perfectly happy; but it is his holiness rather than his happiness which renders him the proper object of adoration. The worshipping hosts of heaven cry "Holy! holy! holy! is the Lord!"<sup>1</sup> but it nowhere appears that they contemplate his happiness as his supreme excellence. Since the happiness of God, so far from being the only good of his nature, is not even its chief good, we may infer that he did not create the universe chiefly for the production of happiness. His love has for its object the well-being rather than the happiness of his creatures; and of like character is the love to which all the moral obligations of men may be reduced. The ultimate good for which God created the world, and to which all virtue tends, is the glory of God, rather than the greatest amount of happiness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Isa. vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> It has been objected to this theory, that if actions were right because productive of the greatest amount of happiness, the conception of right would, in our minds, be attended by the concep-

THEORY 5.—Virtue tends to produce universal goodwill. Our actions are right, when, in performing them, we have the sympathy and approbation of mankind. We may, in any case, safely determine our course of conduct, by inquiring what an impartial spectator would approve.

In our examination of Theory 2, it was shown that the moral sentiment in the breast of an individual, is not the foundation of his moral obligation; much less can it be the foundation of obligation to other men. Hence, the moral sentiment of all men cannot be the foundation of all men's moral obligation. Nor is it even an infallible rule by which to judge of any man's duty. The general approbation of mankind is a better rule than an individual's own moral feelings; but there may be occasions when a man of stern virtue is obliged

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tion of the greatest amount of happiness as its invariable antecedent: and this, it is alleged, is not true, since we do not teach men what actions are right, by showing that they will produce the greatest amount of happiness; and therefore the ideas of the two things have not such a connection in the mind that one of them must be an invariable antecedent of the other. But this objection is invalid. It erroneously assumes that the relation between objects of thought, and the relation between our conceptions of them, must be identical. The fallacy of this assumption may be easily illustrated. It may be true that a body is heavy because it contains lead; but we may conceive that it is heavy, and may convince another that it is heavy, without directing any thought to the presence of the metal.

Other objections to the theory have been founded on the mistaken supposition that its advocates suppose right and productiveness of happiness to be co-extensive qualities. But the moral quality resides in the intention; and the production of happiness cannot be virtuous unless it be intentional. *Productiveness of happiness* is considered the genus, *virtue* the species, and *intention* the specific difference.

to outbrave the censure of the world, and heroically do what is right, in the face of public reprobation.

The rule which the theory proposes, is impracticable. We have no means of ascertaining the moral sentiments of mankind, on every question of duty which calls for decision. These moral sentiments are not uniform; and how to find, among them all, the proper rule of conduct, is an insuperable difficulty. We are advised to imagine what an impartial spectator would approve; but the imagination, after all, is our own, and the rule which it gives, proceeds from our own mind.

THEORY 6.—The universal good to which virtue tends, is impersonal, and consists in the fitness of things, or universal order. The idea of it is not obtained by observation or reflection, but by intuitive reason, like the ideas of space and time; and, like these, is not kept in the mind by memory, but arises spontaneously whenever we have need of it. It mingles with our mental operations, like the ideas of space and time, even when we have no thought of its presence; and it is a present rule of moral judgment to all men, when a moral judgment needs to be formed. Moral good is the tendency of actions to promote this universal good; and, in judging of their tendency, reason operates in processes of deduction or induction; but it conceives of the ultimate good itself by immediate intuition.

Universal order includes geometrical order, which has respect to space; historical order, which has respect to time; philosophical order, which has respect to the relation of cause and effect; and how many other kinds of order, I know not. Now, if every act which does not tend to universal order, is morally wrong, the agent is criminal, whose movements are ungraceful, untimely, or not wisely directed to the accomplishment of his purpose. But every man distinguishes ungracefulness, unseasonableness, and unskilfulness from criminality.



How do men's minds make the distinction? If intuitive reason immediately separates the moral department from every other department of universal order, it must have an immediate perception of the moral quality which distinguishes this department; and, then, all the difficulties attend the theory, which were brought to view in our examination of Theory 3. But if we attribute our discrimination to anything other than intuitive reason, we abandon the present theory.

The rule by which it is affirmed that we form our moral judgments, is one which the mind can at best conceive with great dimness and indefiniteness; and it is, therefore, not such a rule as men need for their direction in the duties of life. The ideas of time and space are attended with no obscurity or indefiniteness; and no man asks what they are—but what is universal order? Of space and time, the child and the savage have as clear conceptions as the philosopher; but a clear conception of universal order—who possesses it? If intuitive reason pours a bright light wherever else it shines, but sheds on virtue's path only a dim and uncertain ray, it cannot be that immortal and responsible man is left to its guidance.

#### SECTION II. THE TRUE DOCTRINE.

OF the six theories which we have examined, the first three suppose that each individual mind has, within itself, all the means necessary for solving the problem that has engaged our attention. The last three suppose it necessary to look beyond the individual mind, and contemplate the subject in its relation to the universe. The fourth theory corresponds to the first, in making happiness the end of virtue; but it substitutes the happiness of the universe for that of the individual. The fifth corresponds to the second, in making moral

approbation the end of right actions ; but for the moral approbation of the agent himself, it substitutes that of mankind. The sixth corresponds to the third, in supposing the end to be an impersonal good intuitively perceived : but the third finds that good in each right action ; and the sixth finds it in a general end to which all right actions have direction and tendency.

Our examination of these theories, in each one of which are some elements of truth, suggests the following observations :—

I. Virtue tends to produce happiness, both individual and universal ; it deserves the approbation of the agent himself, and of all other persons ; and it is itself a good, and tends to universal good. All these propositions are elements of truth, which are found in the several theories, and which ought to be preserved as parts of the true ethical system.

II. The means of solving the moral problem cannot be found in any single human mind. In attempting to find it there, the first three theories fail. Each human mind furnishes data sufficient to demonstrate that moral distinction and moral obligation exist ; but not sufficient for a thorough knowledge of their nature and foundation. When philosophy asks for a solution of the difficult problem, each mind answers, *It is not in me* ; and points outward to some external source of information.

III. The created universe does not furnish data sufficient for a complete solution of the problem. It contains abundant proof everywhere that moral government exists ; but it can exhibit that government only partially and obscurely. When philosophy calls for the solution which it seeks, every mind answers, *It is not in me*, and points outward ; and, therefore, by the united testimony of all created minds, it is external to all : and where then can it be found ?

One Being, too often overlooked by men, even by philosophic men, exists in the universe, to whom moral distinction and moral obligation are so related, that they are inexplicable, if the relation is unheeded. Philosophy travels through all created existence, and seeks in vain for a solution of her problem. When exhausted and despairing, religion meets her, and leads her to the throne of God, the moral governor of the universe, and the source and standard of moral perfection. Here philosophy, transformed into intelligent piety, learns the solution which she has so anxiously and laboriously sought. Here, on the mount of God, elevated above the mists and darkness in which she wandered, she sees the mysterious subject in the clear light of day.

Even in physics, and much more in morals, philosophy needs the aid of religion. The student of nature finds orders of sequence in the changes which he observes; and, having classified these, calls the several classes laws of nature; but on what these laws are founded, or who enacted them, his dim-sighted philosophy does not discover. To nature, and the laws of nature, he attributes the generation and growth of animals and plants, and all the wonderful phenomena which pass under his view. But when religion has poured her bright light on his intellectual vision, he perceives that nature is God operating, and the laws of nature are the modes in which he works. So the moral philosopher, who leaves God out of his system, ascribes moral distinction and moral obligation to nature, or some other abstraction, such as fitness or universal order; but when he admits God into his system, his abstractions are transformed into a living agent and actual operations.

The fourth theory supposes the end of virtue to be

the happiness of the universe. This theory is incomplete without God. In God more happiness exists than in all the universe besides; and if virtue tends to universal happiness, its direction must be toward God. That it should seek to give pleasure to men, and be indifferent whether God is pleased or offended, cannot be supposed. There is a sense in which the happiness of God is incapable of increase or diminution; but there is also a sense in which it is declared, that, because of men's great wickedness, "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."<sup>1</sup> We may be justified in affirming, that, if iniquity were to prevail universally, God would be as miserable as he is now happy. It must be, therefore, that virtue seeks to please God. Moreover, this theory needs an omniscient being to decide for us what actions tend to promote universal happiness.

The fifth theory, also, is incomplete without God. It needs an impartial spectator to judge for each man what is right, or worthy of approbation; and no impartial spectator, of infallible judgment, can be found, except God. . He alone has the perfect knowledge of good and evil; and philosophy aspires to be as God, if she claims the power to discriminate between them, without respect to his judgment.

The sixth theory supposes the end of virtue to be universal order. Universal order must include order in things created and uncreated. Nothing is uncreated but God: yet he is more than all created things together. Universal order must, therefore, include the perfections of God, and the relation of all created things to him, as well as their relation to each other.

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 6.

It is hence manifest, that the sixth theory is wholly incomplete without God.

IV. Moral obligation is founded on the will of God. To understand this subject clearly, we must carefully distinguish between the sense of moral obligation in our minds, and the objective reality which exists independently of our mental conceptions and feelings. The moral government of God is an objective reality, which includes all that we know of moral obligation as an objective reality; and the moral government of God is founded on his will. His right to govern is founded on his nature; but the government itself is founded on his will.

God exercises a natural government over the material world. This government is founded on his will, so that, at his will, all the changes of nature take place. It would be a manifest absurdity to attribute the natural government of the world to fitness or order. Equally absurd is it, and even more absurd, to ascribe moral government, or the moral obligation which it includes, to any such abstraction. Moral government is directed to moral beings, and, being confined to moral beings at its termination, it would be unfit that it should proceed from any other than a moral being. It operates on the will of the governed, and proceeds from the will of the governor.

In acting as the moral governor of the world, God is not subject to any superior power. He owes no subjection to any being, real or imaginary, but does whatever he pleases, and none can stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou? He is subject to no such abstraction as necessity, fitness, or order. If these terms denote anything not existing in his nature, they can have no existence that is not dependent on his will, and therefore subject to him.

The distinction between right and wrong is founded on the nature of God. We find moral obligation operating on the will of man; and here, taking hold of the clue, we follow it up to the will of God; and here the clue stops: but we trace moral quality further. Were moral distinction founded on his will, his own perfections would be without moral excellence, since these do not originate in his will; and were it so, cruelty, fraud, falsehood, and hatred of God would have been virtues, if God had so willed; and to say that God has a right to govern the world, would be to use language without meaning; for there could be no right or wrong antecedent to the will of the governor.

We cannot trace moral distinction to anything beyond the nature of God. When, in tracing the succession of cause and effect, we have gone backward along the line, until we have arrived at God, the first cause, our minds are prone to continue the search, and find a cause for God's existence. Indulging this propensity, we sometimes say that God is self-existent. If this means that his existence is the cause of itself, it must equally mean that his existence is the effect of itself: but the idea that God's existence is an *effect* of anything, the mind rejects. We sometimes say that he exists necessarily; but what do these words signify? God's eternal existence has always rendered his non-existence impossible; for it is impossible for anything to be and not to be at the same time. But if our philosophy looks behind the existence of God to discover some cause necessitating his being, it searches for that which cannot be found. As natural philosophy traces the line of cause and effect to the existence of God, so moral philosophy traces moral quality to the perfections of God; and here both are compelled to stop.

At their origin in God, we contemplate moral quality as prior to moral obligation ; but, at their termination in man, the order is reversed. Moral obligation directly binds his will to the will of God ; and the right or wrong of his actions follows, being determined by his obligations.

## CHAPTER III.

### MORAL FACULTY.

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#### SECTION I. ITS EXISTENCE.

THAT peculiarity in the constitution of our minds, by which they are qualified to exercise moral approbation and disapprobation, and to feel moral obligation, is called the Moral Faculty, or Conscience. The existence of the faculty is demonstrated by our consciousness of its operations; for whatever the mind does, it must have a faculty for doing. Whether these operations proceed from a single faculty, distinct from all other faculties, is a separate question: but some faculty for producing these effects must be supposed.

The question whether the mental phenomena attributed to conscience are to be referred to a distinct faculty of the mind, belongs properly to mental science; but its intimate connection with the subject of morals renders a notice of it proper in this place.

In the use of the term Faculty the student should be on his guard, lest he conceive the mind, like the body, divisible into parts. We distinguish between the eye and the faculty of seeing. The eye, as a corporeal organ, is a *part* of the human body; but the faculty of seeing, as appertaining to the mind, is not a *part* of the mind; for it is a doctrine of mental philosophy that the mind is one and indivisible. In seeing, hearing, smelling, &c., different organs of the body are employed: and we are prone to conceive of the mind as



organized in a manner somewhat similar, and possessing a distinct organ for each distinct class of its operations. Such conceptions are inconsistent with the immateriality and indivisibility of the mind. A faculty of the mind is merely its capability of acting, or being affected, in some particular manner; and the distinction between its faculties arises from the classification of its operations and affections. If the classes are multiplied the faculties are multiplied; and vice versa. Hence the inquiry, whether conscience is a single faculty, or a combination of faculties, may be resolved into this: May all the operations and affections of mind which are attributed to conscience be arranged in one class of the mental phenomena? In moral philosophy the question is of little importance; and in mental science it is a question of mere classification.

Conscience has been defined "that faculty by which we discern the moral quality of actions, and by which we are capable of certain affections in respect to this quality."<sup>1</sup> The discernment of the quality is here distinguished from the affection subsequently arising in the mind: and if the two should be referred to distinct faculties, the facts will not be thereby altered, or their bearing on moral science changed. The view of a landscape is attended with pleasure; but we refer the seeing of the objects to one faculty, and the emotion of pleasure which accompanies it to another. If we, in like manner, refer the discernment of the moral quality to one faculty, and the affection which subsequently arises, to another, both the faculties are included in the import of the term *conscience*, as this term is commonly employed by writers on the subject.

But some writers have maintained that the term *con-*

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<sup>1</sup> Wayland.

*science* ought to be restricted to those mental discernments and affections which respect our own actions only, and in this way distinguish between conscience and the moral faculty, assigning to the latter the cognisance of all moral actions, by whomsoever performed. Perhaps the etymology of the term *conscience* justifies this distinction; but writers have not carefully observed it. The faculty of discerning the moral quality in our own actions, and the faculty of discerning the moral quality in the actions of others, though language may give different names, do not require to be enumerated in science as two distinct faculties.

Some objections to the doctrine that men are endowed with a moral faculty need to be considered.

OBJECTION 1.—Men's notions of right and wrong are the result of education, and differ according to the opinions and usages of the nation to which they belong. In one country parents destroy their children without remorse, or offer them in sacrifice to the gods with religious devotion. In another, such practices shock all the moral feelings. In one country, a son, in the exercise of filial piety, lights the funeral pile which is to consume his widowed mother with the lifeless corpse of her deceased husband. In another, the same son would have spent his own life in arduous toil to sustain and comfort his mother in her bereavement. If conscience were a natural endowment, the moral sense would everywhere take the same view of actions, as the eyes of men everywhere give like perceptions of external objects.

It is not a sufficient answer to this objection, that the moral quality of actions resides in the intention, and that parents who destroy their children, and children who destroy their parents, perform these acts with good intentions. The father may kill his child to save it from the evil to come; and the mother may throw her infant into the Ganges, or burn it to Moloch, that an offended

deity may be propitiated, and calamity averted. A son may assist to destroy his mother, that the sorrows of her widowhood may be terminated, and the fidelity and strength of her conjugal love honorably demonstrated. But these considerations respect the intention *with which* the deeds are done ; and therefore do not contain the moral quality proper to the acts themselves. Why are the deeds themselves viewed so differently, that the moral sense in one country discovers in them a moral quality of blackest atrocity ; and, in another, perceives in them nothing dark or repulsive ?

Nor is it an answer to the objection, that the father who destroys his child imagines that the life of his infant is as much at his disposal as the life of the lamb which he kills for food or sacrifice. How comes it that he so mistakes his rights and obligations, if conscience within is the voice of God, teaching men their duty ?

The true answer to the objection will be found in its inapplicability to the subject. Its argument may correct a mistake concerning the office of conscience, but does not disprove its existence. Conscience does not, immediately on discovering the relation of a father to his child, pronounce, as with the voice of God, all the duties arising from this relation. It does not, immediately on contemplating an action, perceive its moral quality, without any labor of investigation, as the eye distinguishes between red and green. Conscience is not infallible. Its decisions, like those of the intellect, may be erroneous ; but the existence of neither conscience nor intellect can be disproved by its liability to err.

The objection proves diversity, not absence of conscience. If parents destroy children, and children their parents, with good intent, their misguided consciences approve the good intent, and show that, how-

ever blindly and wickedly they act, they are still moral beings. The objection cannot prevail, unless all sense of moral distinction were absent from intelligent human minds.

Corruption of morals in heathen countries, accompanies corruption of religion. When men forsook the worship of the true God, they did not lose all sense of religious obligation, but multiplied for themselves abominable deities, whom they worshipped with wearisome labor and costly sacrifices. Religious obligation is the highest species of moral obligation; and the acknowledgment of it, by the most corrupt and degraded of our race, demonstrates that man, however low he may fall, cannot cease to be a moral being.

Another consideration on this subject ought not to be overlooked. Though the decisions of the human conscience vary much in different circumstances, there is a limit to the variety. In what age or nation have acts of disinterested benevolence been disapproved? Where has it ever been thought right, to requite kindness with intentional unkindness? However widely the moral sentiments of men may diverge, there appears to be a radical principle in which they all agree, and from which they proceed. The corruption of moral sentiment is among the evidences of our depravity, and forms a part of it. It exhibits the law written in the heart—defaced and obscured in various degrees. But, however defaced, it still exists in every heart; and, however obscured, some portions of it are still legible.

OBJECTION 2.—If an innate faculty of the mind determines the obligations arising from our various relations, and gives an original law for the government of our actions, there must be in the mind an innate knowledge of all our relations through life. This no one will maintain.

The moral faculty is natural to man, and belongs to the original constitution of the mind ; but, like other faculties with which it may be compared, it does not come into exercise till a proper occasion for its exercise occurs. Memory is a natural and original faculty of the mind ; but it does not act until we have something to remember. The mind has a faculty for comparing things with each other ; but it does not compare things before it has knowledge of them. We are born with a faculty for reasoning ; but we do not bring into the world minds already filled with syllogisms, and expert in all the deductions of logic. Nature gives us eyes ; but they remain useless till light falls upon them. The light finds the eye already adapted to receive and transmit it, and the mind already adapted to receive the visual sensation. To this innate susceptibility we are indebted for all the knowledge obtained by means of vision. The knowledge is not innate, but the faculty of obtaining it belongs to the natural constitution of man. So the moral faculty is natural to man, though its decisions and impulses do not date back earlier than the occasions which draw them forth.

When the Scripture speaks of "the law written in the heart,"<sup>1</sup> it uses figurative language, which does not, by fair interpretation, denote a perfect code of law adapted to all the possible relations of life ; much less does it affirm the existence of such a code at the time of birth. It refers to men in active life, "their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another ;" and it affirms that they are so far "a law unto themselves" as to be "without excuse."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 20.

OBJECTION 3.—A moral faculty, if it exists, is after all useless. If men choose to disobey its law and endure the remorse which it inflicts, it has no means of enforcing its authority.

With equal plausibility it may be argued, that the faculty of seeing is useless. If men choose to shut their eyes and endure all the consequences of wilful blindness, the seeing faculty has no means of overcoming their obstinacy. Eyes are not useless to mankind, because some men may refuse to see with theirs; and conscience is not useless to mankind, because some men foolishly and wickedly disregard its admonitions.

## SECTION II. ITS OFFICES.

IN taking cognisance of human actions, the mind discerns their moral quality, and feels certain affections with respect to it. If the discernment and the feeling belong to the same faculty, they must be referred to distinct offices of that faculty. A further division of these offices may be made with reference to a diversity in the moral affections, arising from a diversity of the relations and circumstances in which the moral quality may be contemplated.

### 1. Conscience discerns the moral quality of actions.

Because of its discerning office, conscience has been called the moral sense; but, though some analogy may be traced between its operations and those of the senses which give us the knowledge of material objects, it differs from them essentially in the mode of operation. The senses give their testimony directly, and produce uniformity of belief among mankind with respect to the nature and properties of external objects. The discriminations of conscience are judgments formed by comparing actions with some assumed standard of right. This is at least commonly true with respect to the moral

discernments of adult men. The standard of right, according to which they judge, differs in different ages and countries, and with different individuals of the same age and country; and hence arises that diversity in the decisions of conscience, which some have used as an argument against the existence of the faculty.

In classifying mental phenomena, and referring them to different faculties of the mind, it is a question of difficulty, whether the discriminations of conscience are not purely intellectual. The same intellect which studies mathematics studies moral philosophy; and it is difficult to say why all the deductions and conclusions of the latter science might not be successfully made by a mind totally incapable of moral emotion, if supplied with the proper data for its reasonings. Every one is conscious that he exercises his intellect, often with intense solicitude, in his endeavors to find out what is right and what is wrong. If all this mental labor, with the decision in which it terminates, must be referred to some one mental faculty, it is difficult to determine whether it belongs to the domain of conscience or that of reason. This difficulty is best disposed of by denying that the faculties of the mind have separate dominions, like the sovereigns of earth exercising authority within their respective boundaries.

2. Conscience impels us to observe the moral quality, and to search for it when not at once discovered.

Some qualities of material objects awaken but little attention, because they produce but little sensation, either pleasurable or painful; but those qualities which give much pleasure or pain do not pass unnoticed. So human actions may have properties which our minds suffer to pass unobserved; but their natural constitution is such that we cannot be indifferent to the moral quality. To be indifferent to it, is to be past feeling,

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or to have the conscience seared as with a hot iron ; and it is therefore an unnatural state of the mind. Conscience, in its proper exercise, not merely sits in judgment on cases officially submitted, but brings the cases to trial, and presses their investigation.

The impulsion to search for the moral quality when not at once discoverable, though less operative with respect to the actions of others, is strongly felt in the self-examinations of the conscientious man. He searches his actions thoroughly ; and when not successful to the satisfaction of the internal impulse by which he is moved, he prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me."<sup>1</sup> If some persons are less scrutinizing in their self-examination, it is because they give less heed to the impulses of conscience, or have weakened these impulses by sinful habits.

3. Conscience approves or disapproves actions according to the moral quality discovered in them, and reviews our own actions with self-approbation or remorse according as they are judged to be right or wrong.

We are all conscious of feeling approbation or disapprobation in contemplating moral actions. No other testimony to the existence of these emotions can be given, than that of consciousness ; and no other is needed. We have no better proof that we think, that we remember, that we reason. On the same testimony we learn the character of these emotions, and become assured that they differ from all other affections of the mind. All attempts to demonstrate by processes of reasoning, that they are not modifications of some other mental affection, amount to nothing. Either the truth does not come out legitimately in our conclusion, or it

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 23-4.



must be assumed in the premises; for the conclusion cannot contain more than is contained in the premises. It is easy to deceive ourselves in such matters, by assuming unwittingly the thing to be proved. But consciousness furnishes the proof which is needed on this point; for every one knows that the feeling of remorse which arises in reviewing his own guilty deeds, differs from every other pain of which his nature is susceptible.

We may class approbation among our pleasurable, and disapprobation among our painful emotions. The pleasure or pain which attends them in their feebler exercises may pass unnoticed, but we become sensible of it when the emotions are called forth in their full strength. So we are distinctly sensible of the pleasure which the emotion of beauty produces when we contemplate an enchanting landscape, a well-arranged and richly-furnished flower-garden, or a painting of extraordinary merit; but we view the ordinary scenes of nature with no other than the unobserved pleasure of mental tranquillity. We pronounce virtue lovely, and dwell on the contemplation of it with delight. We pronounce vice odious, and turn away from it with abhorrence. If we are shut up with vice in constant view, either our consciences lose their sensibility, or our pain becomes intense. Lot, in Sodom, was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; and a pious mother has often been made completely wretched by the wickedness of a profligate son whom she cannot forget. Such is the tendency of sin to produce pain in its virtuous beholder, that the ever-blessed God is represented as unable to look upon it. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."<sup>1</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> Hab. i. 13.

is compelled to turn away from beholding evil, lest the view of it should disturb the perfect happiness which he enjoys. What an awful prospect is before the workers of iniquity! To be shut up for ever with wicked men and devils, is of itself enough, while immortal conscience lives, in full strength, to render existence intolerable.

Not only do the moral emotions give pleasure or pain to him who feels them, but they incline him to give pleasure or pain to the agent whose actions awaken them. In approving, we feel that he deserves reward; in disapproving, we feel that he deserves punishment. To some extent, this sense of his desert involves a desire to reward or punish him ourselves. Restrained, by regard to higher authority, from taking vengeance in our own hands, we approve the government which inflicts pain on the agent of wickedness; and, in this way, conscience calls for a moral government in the universe, to render to every man according to his deeds.

Let us observe that the reward or punishment which conscience calls for, affects the agent, not his actions. We speak of approving or disapproving an action, but the object of the approbation or disapprobation is in reality the agent. To him we award the praise or blame due to his action, and on him we wish the reward or punishment to fall. This precisely accords with the doctrine before advanced, that the moral quality of an action resides in the intention of the agent.

The operation of conscience in the individual members of human society constitutes, by its united influence, the moral sentiment of the community. Though wickedness has overspread the earth, and introduced innumerable woes, God has been pleased, by the moral faculty in the human breast, to restrain its power, and render human life and human society tolerable. Public

sentiment frowns on vice when interfering with public happiness, and the agent of wickedness feels that mankind are against him. Public disapprobation of crime so far includes a desire to punish it, that men have sometimes, under its sudden impulse, taken vengeance into their own hands, without waiting for the slow process of law. In the ordinary course of procedure, it is left for law to punish the criminal; and so far, law is the conscience of the community: but public moral sentiment condemns innumerable acts which the laws of men do not punish, and, in so doing, calls for a moral government of perfect administration.

The pleasure which arises from moral approbation attends the exercises of piety. The good man approves the character of God, as displayed in his works, and delights in contemplating it. This holy pleasure which he enjoys on earth is a foretaste of the higher pleasure which awaits him in heaven. There the character of God will be more abundantly unfolded to his view, and the pleasure of approbation will ripen into full bliss in the perfect knowledge of God.

Our moral emotions find occasion for strong exercise in the review of our own actions. Conscience impels us to this review, and then rewards or punishes us with self-approbation or remorse. The virtuous man, in his consciousness of innocence, feels peace within. If slandered and condemned by others, the testimony of his own conscience sustains him, and he is satisfied and happy in himself. The guilty man, on the other hand, feels a torment within which nothing can effectually assuage. The world may smile on him, and his cup of sensual pleasure may be filled with delights, but remorse tortures his bosom and preys on his spirits. The secret anguish attends him everywhere, and is a foretaste of the misery that awaits him in the future world.

Conscience not only inflicts its own tortures on the guilty man, but it produces a dread of punishment from others. He feels that mankind are against him, and that God is against him. The workings of conscience within may be unheeded, or they may be in part suppressed by vicious passions, or prevented by obduracy or ignorance—but the sense of deserving punishment, he cannot wholly eradicate from his breast. Hence his fears. Guilt makes him a coward. However bold he may have been in the commission of crime, he becomes tame and cowardly in the apprehension of punishment. He suspects danger from every quarter, and starts with terror when no evil approaches. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth.”<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, conscience often becomes an informant against the transgressor. He has a secret in his breast which he is unable to keep. He cannot act as if it were not there. It requires incessant vigilance to guard every word and action, so that nothing shall furnish a clue to its detection. His timidity induces him to suspect that he is suspected, and he is therefore unable to act the part of conscious innocence. In addition to all this, the sense of his just desert tends to make him submissive; and so far prepares him for confession, that his vigilance is abated, and, at an unguarded moment, the secret is disclosed.

4. Conscience impels us to do what is right, and avoid what is wrong.

This impulse of conscience is prospective, and finds a place in the deliberations of the mind previous to action. Frequently it comes into conflict with strong passion or vehement desire, and then the power of the impulse is manifested in its highest degree. The

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxviii. 1.

struggle which ensues is often as much as the mind can bear. But when a criminal deed has been resolved on, conscience may be hushed into silence until the deed has been consummated. It seems to sleep—but it sleeps to awake again, and punish the slighting of its admonitions with pangs of remorse. In this procedure it acts as God's vicegerent in the human breast. The wicked may learn from its mode of action that, though God may leave them at quiet when they have rejected his authority, and fixed their hearts on a course of transgression, yet he will at length arise against them in judgment and terrible retribution. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."<sup>1</sup>

This prospective impulse of conscience directs the life of the good man. Paul claimed to have acted under its influence when he said, "I have lived in all good conscience until this day."<sup>2</sup> The conduct which conscience previously commands, it subsequently approves; and the first ministers of Christianity must have obeyed its prospective impulse, when they could afterwards say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."<sup>3</sup> Neither the teachings of revelation, nor the influences of the Holy Spirit, dispense with the exercises of the human conscience; but, on the contrary, illuminate its judgments and quicken its impulses.

We are so constituted that a large part of our plea-

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. l. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. i. 12.

sure is experienced in action. Even the bliss of heaven does not consist in mere passive enjoyment, but its inhabitants *serve* God day and night.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the impulse of conscience to the performance of good actions greatly promotes human happiness. It is an inlet of pleasure to the soul during our abode on earth, and through it a stream of delight will flow into our beatified spirits for ever. Both on earth and in heaven it is true, that in *keeping* God's commandments there is great reward;<sup>2</sup> and our mental constitution exhibits an adaptedness, not only to the service which religion requires, but also to the felicity which religion promises.

The investigations of this section assist us to answer such questions as the following :

QUESTION I. — For what purpose is it that, in our mental constitution, moral feeling is superadded to moral discernment?

Feeling is necessary to induce action. We may know the way which leads to an object, but, if we feel no desire to reach that object, we remain stationary, or move in some other direction. The clearest perceptions of right and wrong, if unaccompanied with feeling, would leave us inactive. It was necessary for the well-being of all who may be affected by our conduct, that we should be under the influence of some power impelling us to virtuous actions; and that power is found in the moral feelings with which we are endowed.

But why is a specific feeling necessary for this purpose? Could not man have been placed under a system of government, with rewards and punishments set before him, and be left to the hope of reward and fear of punishment as motives to obedience?<sup>3</sup> If these

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xix. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Paley's definition of virtue appears to admit not only the pos-

feelings of hope and fear may secure obedience, what need is there that feelings of a distinct class denominated moral, should be superadded? This question may be answered by considering other cases in some respects analogous. We are constituted with a love of life, which might lead us to take the food necessary to preserve life. Why is the feeling of hunger superadded? Again, the love of life might lead us to flee from threatening dangers. Why is the emotion of fear superadded? In these cases, specific feelings, hunger and fear, are necessary to secure the desired effect with promptness and certainty. If men were left to take food, when the slow deductions of reason, acting under the influence of love of life, call them to the necessary work, the preservation of life would be left in great insecurity. If men were left to reason and the love of life to guard them from danger, without the emotion of fear, the watchfulness, caution, and activity now displayed in avoiding or escaping danger, would be, to a great extent, unknown. In like manner, the fear or hope of a distant future retribution, is not a sufficient impulse to virtuous action. Reason and the love of happiness would operate too slowly. We need an impulse, which, like that of hunger and fear, operates promptly and directly to its specific object; and this impulse is provided in the moral feelings with which we are endowed.

A further reason for the superaddition of moral feeling appears to be, to render man a moral and accountable creature. It must, I think, be admitted, that there is no natural impossibility to prevent the government

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sibility, but the actual existence, of such a constitution of the human mind. "Virtue is the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness."

of God from being extended over a race of rational beings, capable of hope and fear, but not endowed with moral feeling; yet it does not appear that this would be moral government. As far as we know, the possession of moral feeling is a test by which it may be determined whether a creature was designed for moral government. It is this, which, above everything else, distinguishes man from brutes.

QUESTION II.—Do moral discernment and moral feeling always accompany each other?

In the progress of depravity, men sometimes become past feeling, having their consciences seared as with a hot iron; but they are not thereby rendered ignorant of the distinction between right and wrong. The moral discernment remains, after the moral feelings are extinct, or blunted. On the other hand, it would be difficult to show that our first moral feelings are attended with a distinct conception of right and wrong. Infants, and the young of irrational animals, manifest the emotion of fear, before they have had experience of danger. As this instinctive emotion operates, without any distinct conception of danger, so it may be that our first moral feeling may be unattended with any distinct conception of right and wrong. Allowing the cases which have been mentioned to be exceptions, it will still remain the general rule, that moral discernment and moral feeling accompany each other. Our consciousness testifies that we approve what we perceive to be right, and perceive to be right what we approve.

QUESTION III.—What is the relation between moral discernment and moral feeling?

Do we approve an action because we perceive it to be right; or do we know that it is right, because it has produced in us the feeling of approbation?



Our feelings are often controlled by our judgment. The first view of an object may excite fear; and a subsequent examination of that object may entirely banish our fear, by convincing us that we have no reason to apprehend danger. In like manner, a child may feel strong emotions of disapprobation on seeing the picture of Abraham offering up Isaac; but when he learns that this act was performed in obedience to Divine command, and that it is right to obey God, this feeling is changed into approbation. The last feeling is clearly an *effect* of a moral judgment preceding; but we cannot safely affirm the same concerning the feeling of disapprobation with which the action was first regarded. In one case, we see the standard for trying the action set up, the action compared with it, and the judgment brought in, before the moral feeling exists; but we do not see these in the other case. Before all instruction the mind appears to be a law to itself; and we have reason to conclude, that a feeling of approbation immediately arises on seeing a benevolent action, and a feeling of disapprobation on seeing an intention of doing harm. By this law of moral instinct, the moral character of actions is at first tried; and we learn to consider them as right or wrong. From this our first knowledge of the meaning of the terms *right* and *wrong*, is derived. In this case, therefore, the moral feeling is first in order, and not consequent on any preceding moral judgment.

In the view we have taken of this subject, it may be remarked, that the instinctive moral feelings recognise only the elementary principles of morality. This accounts for the general agreement of nations in the fundamental principles of morals, while they differ so widely in their judgment as to the moral character of many actions. While some support their aged parents,

and others think it right to put them to death, they all regard benevolent actions with approbation. In these moral feelings, the likeness of Deity appears in which man was created, surviving even the ruins of the fall.

### SECTION III. ITS AUTHORITY.

THE authority of conscience may be considered, 1, with respect to other impulses which move to action; and 2, with respect to the authority of God.

I. By the constitution of the human mind, conscience is made the supreme director of our conduct, and invested with authority to control all other impulses to action.

The other impulses to action may be conveniently divided into two classes: those which tend to present gratification only, and those which have respect to our general good. To the first class belong appetites and passions; all the particular impulses of the second class may be included under the name self-love. Appetites and passions call for present gratification, however momentary, regardless of all consequences to ourselves or others. Self-love aims at our good on the whole, taking the future as well as the present into the account; but, if no higher impulse controls its direction, it aims at the good of the individual, disregarding the welfare of all others. All these impulses need to be governed by a higher impulse that the general good may be promoted. In order that man may be adapted to society, as well as for other purposes of his existence, an impulse is fixed in the constitution of his mind, with authority to control appetite, passion, and self-love, and promote the general good. This authoritative impulse is conscience.

The supreme authority of conscience does not imply that it is endowed with overpowering strength. Other

impulses may be stronger, and may prevail: but the impulse of conscience is not the less authoritative on that account. The authority of parents may be resisted by disobedient children; and even the authority of God may be rejected and contemned by sinful men; but in neither case does the authority cease because it fails to produce the proper effect. The impulses which ought to be subordinate to conscience may be in rebellion, and may exercise governing power; but conscience is the rightful sovereign over all the active powers of man.

Conscience is the only impulse which possesses authority in the moral sense of the term. We may speak of obeying other impulses, as we say that matter obeys the law of nature; but no other impulse binds with moral obligation, unless conscience lends its authority. As intelligent beings, our minds are so constituted that self-love holds a higher rank among our impulses than appetite or passion. Irrational animals may yield themselves up to present gratification; and men who do so become assimilated to brutes; but intelligence, without the aid of a moral faculty, will prefer the good of the whole life to a momentary gratification. Self-love may control the lower propensities and teach a temperate use of present enjoyment, and a prudent regard to future good; but the government of self-love is natural, not moral; and temperance and prudence, as exercised in obedience to its dictates, are merely natural virtues: men may practise them, who disobey all the monitions of conscience, and regard not either God or man.

The authority of conscience extends over our appetites and passions, and its chief service in relation to them is to restrain their indulgence. But it also finds at all times proper scope for its exercise, in approving present gratification when not unlawful. It is not

beyond its office to teach that God "giveth us richly all things to enjoy;"<sup>1</sup> and that, within due limits, to enjoy is to obey.

Conscience authoritatively establishes the subordination of our lower propensities to self-love. It requires, with the force of moral obligation, that men should forego present gratification for the sake of future and greater good; and thus converts temperance and prudence into moral virtues, when practised in obedience to its authority. It stamps its disapprobation on beastly indulgence; and moves the scorn and contempt of mankind against the fool who sacrifices the happiness of his whole life, and even of the next hour, to a present momentary sensual gratification.

The authority of conscience extends over self-love, and it is in this chiefly that its supremacy appears.

It is not true, as some have maintained, that all virtuous feeling is a modification of self-love. On the contrary, the virtuous impulse and the impulse of self-love move in opposite directions; the former tending to the diffusion of happiness, and the latter to its absorption. We have seen that all nations, however they may differ from each other in their moral sentiments, agree in approving intentional acts of disinterested benevolence. All consciences approve the outward flow of the affections; and we may infer that the primary impulse of conscience is in this direction; and therefore antagonistic to the impulse of self-love. In this the morality of conscience agrees with that of revelation. The Bible does not command that our affections should tend inwardly and concentrate on self; but that they should move outwardly toward God and our neighbor. The Author of the Bible is the Author of this impulse

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<sup>1</sup> 7 Tim. vi. 17.

in the human mind, which operates as a primary element in our moral nature, and continues to operate even where the moral sentiments and practices of men are most corrupt.

The proof that conscience is, by the constitution of the human mind, clothed with supreme authority, may be satisfactorily drawn from the operations of a single mind; but it is made complete and irresistible by the concurrent moral judgments of mankind. All agree in their approbation of him who obeys the impulse of conscience in opposition to all opposing impulses. The glutton, who indulges his appetite to the ruin of his health and happiness, and the miser, who, obeying the promptings of self-love, seeks his own interest, blind to the interests of all around him, are condemned by the unanimous verdict of society: but all men honor the man who steadily and firmly obeys the impulse of conscience, in opposition to the temptations of pleasure, power, and wealth. The praises of such men are celebrated by poets and historians; and an immortality of renown is awarded to them by the common voice of succeeding generations.

II. The authority of conscience is subordinate to the authority of God.

The supremacy which we have attributed to conscience is not absolute, but relative to the other impulses of the mind. It is invested with this supremacy by the appointment of God.

The constitution of the human mind proceeds from God's creating power. He gives the mind its faculties, and determines the proper order of their operation. If conscience rules in the human breast by original right, it must rule by divine appointment; and therefore by authority derived from God.

That conscience rules by the will of God, may be argued from the beneficial tendency of obedience to its

authority. Virtue promotes happiness according to the order of things which God has established; and virtue implies obedience to conscience. Hence all the benefits resulting from virtue, express the approbation with which the Author of nature regards obedience to conscience. They testify that it rules by his will.

Revelation proves that conscience bears rule by the will of God. We have seen that Paul, and the other ministers of Christ who were his fellow-laborers, obeyed the impulse of conscience, and rejoiced in its approving testimony. The supremacy of conscience was inculcated by them as a doctrine of their religion. Weakness of conscience was sometimes exhibited in abstinence from meat, and the avoiding of things accounted unclean. In such cases the conscience of the individual was made a rule which he could not innocently violate: "He that doubteth is damned if he eat."<sup>1</sup> "To him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."<sup>2</sup> However innocent the action might be in itself, the agent was not innocent if he violated the authority of conscience. The supremacy of conscience is therefore a doctrine of Christianity.

We have proved that conscience rules by the appointment of God, and that God will not hold him guiltless who violates its authority. The fact that it rules by God's appointment, implies its subordination to God. Though a weak and erring conscience cannot be innocently disobeyed, yet, because of its liability to weakness and error, there is necessity to examine its decisions, and correct them by reference to higher authority. Disobedience to conscience is always wrong; but he who obeys conscience is not always in the right. Men are responsible for the state of their conscience, when

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiv. 14.

they neglect the means afforded them for its improvement. Paul thought that he did God service<sup>1</sup> when he persecuted the saints; but when his conscience became enlightened he considered his conduct highly criminal.<sup>2</sup> It is clear, therefore, that conscience may be in error; and that, in this case, obedience to it is not virtue.

#### SECTION IV. ITS IMPROVEMENT.

THE moral faculty is susceptible of improvement. It is not a foreign substance deposited in the mind, unaffected by its growth;—a literal tablet of law written in the heart, remaining always the same. But it is the mind itself in one class of its operations, and it is therefore susceptible of improvement like all other powers of the mind. The Scriptures speak of weak consciences; of defiled consciences; but weak consciences may be strengthened, and defiled consciences may be purified. A progress of improvement in the moral faculty is as possible as in the understanding, the memory, the taste, or the reasoning faculty.

In its susceptibility of improvement, the moral faculty differs from the instincts of brutes. These are the same in every individual of a species; and are as operative in the beginning of life as in old age. The hen hatches and trains her first brood with as much skill as the last; and the hen of this generation is no wiser than her parent hen before the flood. Man's progressiveness is an argument for the soul's immortality; and the progressiveness of the moral faculty connects our moral character with the immortality which we have in prospect.

The improvement of the moral faculty is one of our

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<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 2; Acts xxvi. 9, 11. <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. i. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 9

most important duties. Our moral nature is that which chiefly distinguishes us from brutes, and gives us the elevated position which we hold among God's creatures. The cultivation of the intellectual powers is important for the interests of the individual, and of society. Hence the schools multiplied through the land are a blessing to our age and country; and the years of toil spent in them as we advance to manhood, are a profitable discipline, preparing us to act our part at mature years. But the cultivation of the moral powers greatly transcends in importance. Without this, all our intellectual strength and acquisitions may be a curse to ourselves and to mankind. He who cultivates his understanding, and neglects his moral faculty, though men should esteem him wise, is a fool in God's sight; and eternity will demonstrate his folly.

The cultivation of the moral faculty is a religious duty. It is enjoined in the divine command, "Keep thy heart with all diligence;"<sup>1</sup> and it cannot be performed aright, unless performed with reference to the authority of God. The moral faculty in its highest exercise is the religious faculty; and if it is not made subservient to religion, the grand purpose of the endowment is not attained. The religious obligation to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"<sup>2</sup> binds us to cultivate all our moral powers, and use them to the glory of God. He who aims to improve them with some other end in view, is misdirecting the best energies of his nature; and whatever else he may attain, he cannot secure the favor of God.

The means of improving the moral faculty may be advantageously considered, with a distinct reference to its several offices.

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. iv. 23.  
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<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 18.



1. The discriminating power of conscience may be improved, by a diligent study of God's will, in the various methods in which it is made known to us. The voice of conscience within is one mode in which God speaks to us; and, therefore, its language should be heeded. The same voice speaks in the breasts of other men; and their moral judgments may assist us to correct our own. The law written in the heart by the finger of the Creator, has been defaced and obscured; and, to obtain a knowledge of the original writing, it is better to examine the mutilated copies of it found in many hearts, than to rely on one of these mutilated copies exclusively. But the voice of God, in his works and in his word, makes known his will with more clearness and certainty. God overrules the sequences of nature; and we may often learn what actions are in accordance with his will, by observing their tendencies and results. But the clearest revelation of his will, is in his holy word; and by the study of this, above every other means, we may become wise to distinguish between right and wrong.

The means of moral cultivation may be applied in parental instruction. The wise man has said, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."<sup>1</sup> Those children who are under the care of wise and pious parents, enjoy advantages for moral improvement which are above all price. The best models of virtue ought to be carefully studied; such as are exhibited in the lives of men eminent for their virtue, and especially in the life and character of Jesus Christ. Moral essays may be read, and systems of moral science may be studied, to great advantage. But the best light to assist our moral dis-

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxii. 6.

criminations, is obtained from the word and Spirit of God. If we take his word for our guide, and humbly pray for the aid of the Holy Spirit in the study of it, we may confidently hope to be led in the right way.

The study of moral distinctions is not all that we need. No one becomes a skilful musician, by the mere study of musical science; but long and laborious practice is requisite. So the promptness of moral discrimination, which is needed in the active business of life, cannot be acquired but by practice. We should accustom ourselves to moral investigations, until we acquire facility in making them, and until our moral vision, like a practised eye, can distinguish readily and clearly, what, to the less practised, is covered with obscurity.

2. The tendency to form moral judgments may be promoted or checked by habit.

Actions may be contemplated with admiration, because of their skill, their daring, or their laborious and patient perseverance. In our admiration of these qualities, we may wholly overlook the moral quality which the actions contain; and, if we frequently estimate actions by some other than their moral quality, we shall form a habit of doing so. This will render us less observant of that highest quality, on which, more than any other, the true worth of actions depends. On the other hand, if we allow no lustre which may attend an action, so to dazzle our eyes as to blind us to its moral quality, we shall acquire the habit of estimating actions by a moral standard. This habit is necessary to virtue. The keenest moral discernment will avail nothing, if it is not used; as good eyes do not profit, if they are kept closed. If we would be virtuous, we should accustom ourselves to ask concerning every action, *Is it right?* Whatever profit or pleasure it may yield, and whatever admiration of gaping beholders

it may excite, we should instantly and firmly estimate its worth by its moral quality.

3. Our moral sensibility may be increased or lessened by habit.

In our first contact with vice, we are perhaps shocked with its odiousness; but, if we allow ourselves to become familiar with it, our aversion subsides, and, in the language of Pope, "we first endure, then pity, then embrace." This tendency of habit to blunt the moral sensibility may be illustrated by innumerable examples. The first oath startles him who utters it, the first lie is pronounced with trembling tongue, and the first theft is committed with trepidation — but repetition inspires courage, and hardens the heart. Thus the stripling, who first transgressed with hesitation and fear, becomes a monster of vice, sinning without remorse.

On the other hand, moral sensibility is increased by virtuous habit. Self-approbation, in its earliest exercise, is attended with pleasure; but, as we make progress in virtue, the pleasure becomes greatly enhanced. Unlike the pleasures of sense, it never cloy. The self-approving mind enjoys a continual feast, and with a constantly-increasing relish. This tendency of virtue to quicken our sensibility to moral pleasure, renders immortality unspeakably attractive to the good man. He rejoices to know that the pure and perennial fountain of delight, which is now springing up in his breast, will rise, and continue to rise, to life eternal.

4. The impulse to virtuous action may be strengthened or weakened by habit.

If we yield to the impulses of appetite, passion, and self-love, these impulses acquire strength. The inebriate, when he first tasted the intoxicating cup, was free from its enslaving power—but he is free no longer. Habit has bound him in chains, and delivered him up,

body and soul, to the merciless tyrant. The miser at first felt but little love for the dime which he first hoarded, but the habit of gain has given overpowering strength to the avaricious propensity which now rules in his breast with resistless sway. While these impulses gain strength by indulgence, the impulse to virtue grows weak by neglect. At first it presented a barrier, but the fence has been gradually thrown down, until the unlawful propensities roam at large in the soul, and hold undisputed possession. Such is the progress of vice.

The progress of virtue, though in the opposite direction, is made in a similar manner. The impulse to virtue becomes strengthened by successful conflict with the lower propensities. Every victory increases its power, and weakens the opposing forces, until progress in the right way becomes easy. They who travel in this road go on from strength to strength, and difficulties and opposition retire before them. Happy are they who gain this victory, having crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.

The extent to which the moral faculty may be improved is indefinite. The intellect of man roams abroad through the universe, and finds no boundary to the increase of knowledge. Equally boundless is the prospect which opens before the moral faculty. The possibility of progress in virtue has no limit. Habit strengthens the impulse to virtuous actions, increases the moral sensibility, and promotes the tendency to form moral judgments. As the good man makes progress in virtue, his eye is more fixed on its beauty, his heart is more ravished with its charms, and his feet move in the delightful road with accelerated speed. It becomes his meat and drink to do good; and, in

fulfilling the will of God, he enjoys heaven begun on earth.

Alike interminable is the dark prospect before the transgressor. The virtuous impulse, habitually resisted, ceases to operate, until he becomes lost to virtue. Even in the present life, some, as we have reason to believe, are given up to hardness of heart, and are therefore beyond hope. In these, the indulged propensities have the mastery of the soul; and often, like the foul spirits which possessed the ancient demoniacs, rend it with keen anguish. These propensities find some indulgence in the present life, and therefore present misery is not complete; but at death they will be separated for ever from the objects of their craving. What then will be left? The pleasure arising from self-approbation has gone, even in the present life, and remorse and foreboding horror fill the breast. Sometimes, indeed, remorse sleeps, because the moral sensibility has become benumbed. But conscience is immortal, and, in the future world, will be found to be the worm that dieth not, preying for ever on the vitals of the lost. Even before death, the stupefied conscience sometimes awakes, and begins its work of torture. In the chamber of the dying sinner, the exclamation has been heard: "Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation!" Such outbursts from the world of woe sometimes meet the wicked, as the door of their eternal prison opens to receive them.

## CHAPTER IV.

### VIRTUE.

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#### SECTION I. IN GENERAL.

VIRTUE, or moral rectitude, is conformity to moral obligation. Some persons restrict the use of the term to such actions as are beneficial to men, and distinguish it from piety or duty to God; but the use of it for all duty, both to God and men, has the authority of good writers. Nor does its signification include external acts only; for we speak of virtuous affections, as well as virtuous actions.

Our moral obligations are founded on the authority of God, the moral governor of the universe; and hence, his commandment or expressed will is the rule of obligation. Affections and actions are virtuous, which conform to the will of God. He commands that we should love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. This law is the proper standard of virtuous affections; and such actions are virtuous as flow from these affections.

Love cannot be exercised toward an object of which we have no knowledge. The virtuous mind enlarges the sphere of its affections, as its knowledge increases. The relations which we bear to our neighbors are various; and the virtuous affection prompts to various courses of action, corresponding to these several rela-

tions. In the progress of life, our relations multiply; and the field for virtuous action accordingly enlarges. As knowledge extends to beings before unknown, the heart finds new objects to love; and, as new relations are discovered, the expanding love prompts to new methods of doing good. Hence, our progress in virtue is as illimitable as our progress in knowledge.

We have before seen that the moral faculty is capable of indefinite improvement; and we have now discovered that the scope for virtue is perpetually enlarging, with the increase of knowledge, and the multiplication of our relations. The exercise of virtue becomes increasingly easy and delightful; and the opportunities for its exercise are indefinitely multiplying.

#### SECTION II. IN IMPERFECT BEINGS.

WE enter on life without knowledge; but we have faculties for acquiring it, which are brought into exercise from the commencement of our being. We find ourselves surrounded by other beings, to whom we sustain such relations, that we cannot exist without them, nor act or think, but with reference to them. We are at first incapable of comprehending these relations; but we acquire knowledge of them as our minds expand; and this progress of knowledge continues during life.

Our relations to other beings furnish occasions for the exercise of the moral faculty, so far as they become known. Hence, moral obligation increases as our knowledge increases. The services which are due to mankind from persons of mature years, children are incapable of rendering. They neither comprehend their relations to others, nor understand the modes of doing good in these several relations. Imperfection of knowledge, in both these respects, limits their obligations.

But the limit of obligation is not determined by the actual knowledge which we possess, if greater knowledge were possible, and we have failed to attain it through criminal negligence. We are under obligation to employ all our powers in doing good. We are bound to use the intellect aright, as well as the hands; and if we have failed to use it for the accomplishment of the greatest possible good, we are so far blame-worthy. Hence, our obligations are determined, not by the actual knowledge which we possess, but by that which we might have attained, if our minds had been intent on doing good above everything else.

Our moral judgments are dependent on our knowledge; and therefore imperfection of knowledge necessarily produces imperfection of conscience. But further imperfection of conscience may arise from other causes. As we fail to attain knowledge, through a defect in the virtuous impulse which moves to intellectual exercise, so, through a like defect in the virtuous impulse, we fail to use aright the imperfect knowledge which we have acquired. We do not study the moral quality of actions with requisite solicitude; and therefore it is imperfectly discovered. The moral quality discovered does not affect our moral sensibility as it ought, because that sensibility is imperfect. Hence the quickness and intenseness of our moral approbation or disapprobation, are not proportionate even to our imperfect discovery of the moral quality. And lastly, the moral impulse to do right, exhibits a still further defect; for we often see and approve the right, and follow the wrong.

In imperfect beings, the virtuous impulse operates defectively in all the ways which have been mentioned; and at the same time, the impulse of appetite, passion, and self-love operate with their full power. These gain



strength by habit, and the virtuous impulse becomes less and less able to resist them. Every surrender which it makes, prepares it to yield afterwards with less conflict; and this is "the course of this world," in which men fulfil "the desires of the flesh and of the mind,"<sup>1</sup> and yield themselves up the slaves of sin.

The deficiency of our virtue cannot be correctly estimated by our consciousness of it. The imperfection of knowledge, the imperfect discernment of the moral quality, and the imperfect sensibility of the moral faculty, all combine to prevent or lessen our conviction of wrong. Hence many imagine themselves to be virtuous who would start up with alarm at a discovery of their true character. This was Paul's experience: "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."<sup>2</sup>

So far as the means of knowledge and improvement in virtue are within our reach, we are responsible for the right use of them. For all the knowledge which we would have attained, and for all the virtuous habits which we would have acquired, if every impulse to virtue had been perfect from the origin of our being, we are now responsible. By this rule we must measure our present obligations; and by this mode of computation we may learn the alarming truth, that our guilt is accumulating perpetually, and with accelerated speed. Every past failure renders us less able to fulfil the next requirement, and makes the next failure greater.

An imperfect being may be conscious of his moral condition; and may, with penitence for past failures, make efforts at reformation. But his penitence and reformation are present duties; and, being the result

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 9.

of imperfect conviction, are not equal to the measure of present obligation. Hence, instead of supplying the defect, their imperfection adds to the amount of the failure. Such is the condition of fallen man. No penitence or efforts at reformation can restore him to perfect virtue ; much less can they make amends for his past disobedience to the authority of God. In this hopeless condition the gospel of Christ finds him, and offers him the only possible salvation.

### SECTION III. RELATION TO HABIT.

THE power of habit to produce facility of action is truly wonderful. The child, about the close of his first year, totters over the carpet, and puts one foot before the other with hesitating and laborious effort. The power of habit transforms him, after a time, into a playful boy, running and leaping with speed, grace, and fearless thoughtlessness. When the organs of speech begin their action, sounds are formed with difficulty ; and some of the consonants are not properly uttered, until months have passed in frequent and painstaking effort. But a few years of practice converts this faltering learner of simple sounds, into a fluent speaker, at whose will the organs of speech move with rapidity and accuracy, and pour forth words with the copiousness and rapidity of a torrent, and with the precision of new coin from the mint.

Habit not only gives the mind that command over the muscles of the body, which is exemplified in running, and speaking, and in all the arts and business of life ; but it also greatly facilitates operations which are purely mental. Long processes of profound reasoning are rendered possible by habit ; and habit enables the mind, which once reasoned out its little deductions with the slowness and hesitation of the tottering infant in its

first steps, to hasten to its conclusions with lightning speed.

In a large part of human actions, men could not take time for long deliberation, without losing the opportunity for acting; but the want of time is made up by the facility which the power of habit produces. In the ordinary course of life, we commonly act from habit, with very little thought. No man who walks a mile, thinks on the way which foot he shall next advance, and which muscle he shall next put in motion. So our moral decisions are, for the most part, made under the influence of habit with very little thought.

But are men responsible who move on thoughtlessly under the influence of habit? If habit destroyed responsibility, invincible habits of vice would render a man perfectly blameless; or, in other words, consummated vice would be pure virtue. Men are responsible for their habits, and all their consequences; and hence, the formation of virtuous habits is an important part of human duty. We should study and act with a constant reference to self-improvement in this particular. Every duty should be performed, not merely for the sake of the good which it may effect to others, but also for the sake of its benefit to ourselves, in strengthening and establishing the habit of virtue. In some cases, this last consideration is alone a sufficient motive for action. When a beggar asks alms, we may sometimes doubt whether by giving we shall supply real want, or reward a false pretence; but, having no means at hand for settling this question, we decide to give for our own sakes, to strengthen the habit of benevolence.

Habits of thought should be guarded, as well as habits of action. Trains of thought may not startle us, unless we see them approaching to some wrong action, but it does not follow that they are harmless. Licen-

tious imagination and unlawful desire may be strengthened by the power of habit, while all their movements are strictly confined within the mental domain ; and the paths in which they move may become a trodden highway, overspreading and hardening the heart. If we would be virtuous, we must keep our hearts with all diligence.

#### SECTION IV. RELATION TO HAPPINESS.

WE are so constituted as to derive pleasure from surrounding objects. Our senses are inlets through which pleasure flows in upon us from the commencement of our being. The food which nature provides for the sustenance of the infant gives pleasure to the sense of taste. The warmth of the mother's bosom, and the soft touch of her breast, give pleasure to the sense of feeling. In a short time the other senses derive pleasure from beautiful colors, melodious sounds, and fragrant odors. The world is a great storehouse of pleasure, and the young sentient being enters it with capacities precisely adapted to enjoy the rich and boundless variety which the Creator's bounty has provided.

Although all the senses find appropriate objects to gratify them, the stream of gratification is not flowing into every sense incessantly. The infant does not need to receive the mother's milk without intermission, and, by a wise arrangement, the pleasure of receiving it ceases at the proper point of time ; but subsequently, by another wise arrangement, a desire arises, preparing for another supply of the delicious nectar, and enhancing the pleasure which the draught affords. This desire operates before the infant's mind is capable of conceiving the object desired. But as the mental faculties are developed and brought into exercise, con-

ceptions of agreeable objects awaken desire, which prompts to efforts for obtaining gratification, and increases the gratification when obtained. Few of our pleasures come upon us unexpectedly, and therefore the chief part of our enjoyment consists in the gratification of desire.

Desire itself becomes a source of enjoyment, when accompanied with a hope of attaining the object desired. The mind forms a conception, not only of the object itself, but also of the pleasure which it will yield us ; and this pleasure becomes associated, in the imagination, with every step of our progress in acquiring it. Hence, it often happens that the pleasure of anticipation is greater than that which is derived from the actual possession of the object desired.

Our minds are capable of entertaining innumerable forms of desire, besides those which have immediate respect to sensual gratification. Among these may be enumerated the desire of society, of knowledge, of power, of wealth, and of fame. These desires move us to action. The very action of our mental and corporeal powers seems to be productive of pleasure ; but the pleasure is greatly increased by the co-operating influence of desire, which in some way attends every movement.

The proof is abundant that God designed to make provision for human happiness. He created all the objects around us, and created within us the susceptibilities adapted to derive pleasure from them ; and he has so established our connection with them, that the enjoyment comes on us necessarily. We cannot live and move without it. It is, therefore, manifestly the will of God that we should derive pleasure from the objects which he has created capable of affording it. That any object can give us pleasure is a sufficient

reason for using it, unless there is some reason to the contrary. If one course of action will yield more pleasure than another, we do right to prefer it, unless some reason to the contrary requires a different decision.

Experience teaches men that it is unwise to give themselves up without restraint to the pleasures of the present moment. Present indulgence unfits, in many cases, for future enjoyment. He who eats to excess impairs his health, and renders himself unfit, not only for many other enjoyments of life, but even for the pleasures of the table. Innumerable cases occur in which a prudent regard for our own happiness requires abstinence from present indulgence. It is, therefore, manifestly the will of God that there should be a limit to the indulgence of present gratification. Happiness is continual pleasure ; and, to attain the highest degree of it, we must not seek the highest gratification of any one moment, disregarding every other moment of life. The happiness of life is the sum of enjoyment throughout its whole duration, and prudence teaches us to have respect to the whole.

In the experience of life, many occasions occur for choosing, not only between pleasures of like kind at different moments, but also between pleasures of unlike kind at the same moment. I may spend an hour at a banquet, or I may prefer to enjoy for that hour the society of a valued friend. I may seize an opportunity to indulge my desire of wealth by taking advantage of my neighbor, or I may prefer the pleasure of an approving conscience. In making the choice in such cases, a regard even to the present moment will often be sufficient to determine in favor of virtue, but the weight in virtue's scale becomes greatly increased when the future is included with the present. The banquet will yield me no lasting advantage, but the

prudent counsel of my valued friend may benefit me greatly through all future life. The dishonest gain which I have an opportunity to make, can at the most increase a little my store of uncertain riches ; but an approving conscience, free from the enduring pangs of biting remorse, is a richer source of pleasure than mines of gold. A prudent regard for our own happiness is sufficient to give a decided preference to virtue above vice.

We have seen that he who seeks his happiness by aiming at the highest possible gratification of each moment, fails of his object. God's arrangements interpose an obstacle, and forbid that happiness should be sought in this way. In like manner, he who intently pursues his own happiness, regardless of the happiness of others, fails to attain his object. Here another obstacle is presented. If I existed alone in the universe, connected in no manner with any other being, I might find no obstacle to the direct pursuit of my own happiness ; but God has placed me in society, and fixed me in such relations to himself and my fellow-creatures, that I am obliged to have regard to the interests of others. If I seek my own happiness exclusively, I cannot succeed. I enter into conflict with the interests of all others ; and, with the universe against me, and God against me, success is impossible. God's arrangements make happiness the reward, not of him who pursues happiness, but of him who pursues virtue. Virtue tends to the happiness of society ; and man, formed for society, is required to seek the good of the whole. He who seeks his own good, apart from that of all others, and he who seeks the gratification of the present moment, apart from that of every other moment of life, are alike foolishly opposing the plans of God, and attempting impossibilities.

We have seen that we cannot attain happiness by being engrossed in the direct pursuit of it. This point may be rendered clearer by a further inquiry into the nature of our impulses.

I. No mere impulse, however strong, can insure gratification.

Appetite seeks present gratification, but it does not give capacity for it. The susceptibility of gratification is distinct from the appetite which impels to it. We can conceive of an animal fitted to receive food with pleasure, as the earth drinks the shower when it comes, but having no memory of past, and no desire for future gratification. On the other hand, we can conceive of an animal tortured with hunger, but incapable of deriving pleasure from food when obtained. Since the impulse may exist without the susceptibility of gratification, the presence of the impulse is not of itself sufficient to insure gratification.

Self-love impels to the pursuit of happiness, but it does not contain in itself the susceptibility of happiness. The prudence which it brings into exercise, selects the enjoyments to be preferred, but does not create them. We can imagine an earnest longing for happiness, with an inability to enjoy it; and such cases are not wholly imaginary. Few persons are so happy as never to experience this state of mind; and, in some of melancholy disposition, it is almost habitual. We see, therefore, that the impulse to seek happiness gives not the susceptibility of enjoying it.

II. The lower impulses best attain their own object, when they act in subordination to the higher.

Appetite impels to present gratification; but the highest gratification is not obtained by the continued excitement and indulgence of the appetite. The laborer eats his food with keener relish than the glut-



ton. The glutton, by devoting himself to the pleasure of eating, not only unfits himself for other enjoyments, but actually enjoys the pleasures of the table less than he does who subjects the impulse of appetite to the higher impulse of self-love—that is, to the control of prudence.

In like manner, the impulse of self-love best attains the happiness at which it aims, by acting in subordination to the higher impulse of conscience. This is exemplified in such cases as the following:—

1. A man may obey self-love in opposition to conscience. In this case his action is vicious, and must be followed, sooner or later, with the evil consequences of vice. According to the divine arrangements, vice has an inevitable tendency to produce misery; and he who acts viciously under the impulse of self-love, must endure this misery. On the other hand, the gratification at which self-love aims, is uncertain. They who most eagerly pursue happiness, frequently find disappointment in the progress, and vexation of spirit at the end of their course.

2. A man may, in obedience to self-love, perform the acts which conscience requires. In this case his act is, in form, virtuous; but, not being performed in obedience to conscience, it cannot yield the pleasure of conscious virtue. This course, therefore, does not secure the highest happiness. If it escapes the penalty of vice from the external arrangements of Providence, it does not obtain within the breast the moral rewards of virtue, and will not obtain the final approbation of the Great Judge, and the reward of everlasting happiness.

3. A man may subject his lower impulses to the impulse of conscience, and do what is right, because it is right. In this case he secures the external advantages of virtue, its present internal rewards, and the future

reward which God has promised. This is the highest happiness possible. Self-love can aim at nothing higher; and hence, self-love best attains its object when it yields the supremacy to conscience.

The subordination of the lower impulses is necessary to the moral health of the soul. When the appetites and passions burst through the restraints of prudence, and when self-love rejects the authority of conscience, the soul is diseased. The disorder gathers strength from the power of habit. Some diseases of the body have a tendency to effect their own cure, and to fortify the system against the possibility of their return; but the disease of the soul ever tends to wax worse and worse. Its progress, like that of bodily disease, is ever attended with pain, and its fatal termination is death eternal. We need a remedy which nature cannot afford; and a physician whose knowledge extends infinitely beyond the boundaries of our moral science.

From the preceding discussions, the following rules of conduct may be deduced:—

1. It is right to seek the highest gratification of the present moment, when no higher obligation forbids.

2. A prudent regard for our own happiness ought to control the gratification of the present moment, and to direct our conduct, when no higher obligation opposes.

3. The pursuit of individual happiness should be conducted in subordination to the general good; and such actions as promote the general good, are to be accounted virtuous, when we have no express command of God to regulate our conduct.

#### SECTION V. INSUFFICIENCY OF CONSCIENCE TO PRODUCE PERFECT VIRTUE.

##### *Causes.*

THE lower impulses of our minds are not in subjec-

tion to conscience, as they ought to be. In this fact, and in the crimes which proceed from it, the depravity of mankind appears. When the first man came forth in moral symmetry and beauty from the creating hand of God, all the powers of his mind were in due subjection to conscience; but a rebellion has taken place, and the lower propensities have cast off the allegiance due to the presiding impulse, and now frequently tread it under foot. Every man has a consciousness that his breast is not the perpetual abode of that peace and order which belong to perfect virtue; and hence, from the testimony of universal consciousness, man is a fallen and depraved being. It is a deeply interesting inquiry, whether conscience has sufficient power to regain its lost dominion, and restore the order of perfect virtue. Its insufficiency for the accomplishment of this, appears in two important particulars.

I. Conscience fails because of defect in the strength of its impulse.

In a perfectly virtuous mind, the impulses are so adjusted as to operate in harmony; but depravity has introduced disorder into the movements of the human mind. The impulse of conscience has been weakened, and the lower impulses have acquired disproportional strength. Habit increases the strength of the powers which are most used; and hence, the lower propensities gather strength faster than conscience; and the departure from the proper adjustment, is constantly increasing. To subdue the unduly increased power of the lower impulses, conscience needs a strength beyond what it would have acquired, had it maintained its authority, and kept them under control. But its strength has increased less than if it had continued to exercise its proper authority. It has, therefore, more work to accomplish, with less strength for accomplishing

it. The advantage in the struggle is against it; and this advantage in favor of the lower propensities, the power of habit is perpetually increasing. The disorder which sin has introduced into our mental powers, tends to spread; and conscience has not power to expel it. Hence, every man who understands his moral condition, may well adopt the language of Paul—"I am carnal, sold under sin. \* \* \* O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"<sup>1</sup>

## II. Conscience fails through defect of knowledge.

The impulse of conscience is never contrary to our moral judgment. If there is a primary impulse of conscience, antecedent to the exercise of moral judgment, it consists in an elementary benevolent affection, which is not directed to any definite result until our relations to other beings begin to be understood. It is then directed in its exercise by moral judgment, formed on the knowledge of these relations. Hence, moral judgment, if not necessary to the existence of the moral impulse, is necessary to its exercise; and moral judgment cannot be formed without knowledge.

The perfectly virtuous mind acts under an impulse to regard the moral quality of actions above every other quality, and to estimate the knowledge of duty more highly than all other knowledge. This impulse directs the intellectual powers to acquire, from all possible sources, such knowledge as is needed to determine what is right. The same virtuous impulse causes all the knowledge thus acquired, to be employed in forming moral judgments; and directs the subsequent actions in perfect conformity with these moral judgments. In the depraved mind, the connection at every link in this chain of sequences is weakened. The impulse to vir-

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 14, 24.

tuous action, though it takes the direction pointed out by the moral judgment, does not move with the proper momentum. The moral judgment is formed sluggishly and negligently, without the proper use of all the knowledge actually possessed. And the amount of knowledge actually possessed is less than that which was possible, and which ought to have been acquired. Conscience cannot do its work without knowledge; and it must fail, when the knowledge is defective, and when even this defective knowledge is not duly employed.

*Consequences.*

The failure of conscience to control the lower propensities yields to these the government of the soul; and men, instead of fulfilling their moral obligations according to the will of God, fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. These propensities have their power strengthened by habit, and their dominion becomes firmly established. Habit tends to produce a fixed state. The longer men continue in the way of transgression, the more hopeless their moral state becomes. So the Scriptures teach: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."<sup>1</sup>

But why has our benevolent Creator given such fatal power to habit? Why do the sins of youth and manhood bind in chains the aged transgressor, and render him a hopeless captive? We are admonished by this arrangement in the constitution of the human mind, that the present life is a state of probation. Here only is change of moral character possible, and here we see a constant tendency to fixedness of state, and are perpetually warned that the time within which change can

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. xiii. 23.

take place is rapidly passing away. Youth is a period of probation for manhood, manhood is a period of probation for old age: and youth, manhood, and old age, all constitute the probation for eternity. That this probation may terminate happily, the power of habit should be gained over to virtue's side. If youth be devoted to virtue, it will prepare for a virtuous and useful manhood—the hoary head will become a crown of glory—and the whole life will be ended with an assured hope of receiving, in the life to come, a crown of never-fading lustre.

The law of our mental constitution which gives habit its power, while it teaches that we are in a state of probation, assures us that we are under the moral government of God, rewarding or punishing us according to our works. We reap, even in the present life, according to what we sow. The practice of virtue gives virtuous habits, with all their beneficial effects; the practice of vice gives vicious habits, with all their baneful effects. If habit binds the sinner in chains, his guilt has been accumulating while habit has been gaining its power; and not until his cup of iniquity is full, does he pass the limit of probation.

In a sinner's progress, his conscience does not testify fully either to the deterioration of his moral character, or the accumulation of his guilt. His moral judgment fails through want of knowledge, or through neglect to use properly the knowledge which he possesses. Hence he is not conscious of his true condition. Conscience is not only weakened and defiled, but it also becomes benumbed, or, in the language of Scripture, "seared with a hot iron."<sup>1</sup> A growing insensibility of con-

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 2.

science is an alarming symptom of moral disease, a precursor of eternal death.

Conscience not only testifies to our moral character, but it also rewards and punishes. It rewards with self-approbation, and punishes with remorse. But the sinner's conscience fails, not only in its testimony, but also in its retribution. It does not punish with remorse equal to the measure of his guilt; and sometimes, when the guilt is most aggravated, remorse seems to sleep most profoundly. But God never sleeps, and natural religion and revelation testify that his judgments slumber not. In the course of nature, the consequences of crime follow regardless of the sinner's insensibility. Men may, in heathen lands, be ignorant that idolatry, polygamy, and infanticide, are crimes; but the natural consequences of these evils appear in their effects on society. God teaches what is right and wrong, whether men will learn or not; and he gives assurance that his moral government is not hindered by man's ignorance or perverseness. In his final judgment, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those who sin under the light of the gospel; but all may learn, from his dispensations in the present life, that his justice is inflexible, and that the present retributions of conscience, while they warn us of the judgment to come, do not determine its character, or indicate its terrible severity. The most intolerable anguish that conscience ever inflicts, in the present life, is a drop from the cup of God's displeasure. Who will estimate the full measure of suffering, when the most guilty shall be made to drink the whole cup of divine wrath?

## CHAPTER V.

### KNOWLEDGE OF DUTY.

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#### SECTION I. MORAL LAW.

MORAL law is a proposition, or series of propositions, defining men's obligations. It is therefore a rule by which duty may be known.

The term *law* properly belongs to the department of morals; but in a transferred sense, it is used in physical science. The difference of its signification in the two uses of it, deserves to be considered.

The term denotes primarily the command of a governor, promulgated in language, as a rule of conduct for those whom he governs. It is a form of words prescribing the duty of the governed. Moral obligation may exist when not expressed in words; but moral law is properly an expression of this obligation, in language either spoken or written. But the term is frequently applied to obligation that is not so expressed. So Paul speaks of the moral obligation felt by the Gentiles as a law in their hearts; yet, even in this case, he calls it a "law written."<sup>1</sup> Though not literally expressed in words, it is conceived to be so expressed, and written out as the laws of kings were written on tablets for the observance of their subjects. Moral law is properly the will of God, expressed in language, or conceived to

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 15.



be so expressed, for the government of intelligent creatures. Physical law governs unintelligent matter ; and it is the will of God, not expressed in language for the observance of rational and moral agents, but executed by himself in his providential government of the world.

Physical law is an established order of sequence in physical events ; thus, it is a physical law, or law of nature, that water, if exposed to a high degree of heat, will be converted into steam.<sup>1</sup>

The order of sequence denoted by physical law, is established and invariable. Water is not sometimes converted by high heat into steam, and at other times into ice ; nor does it require a different degree of heat at different times to effect the change. Nature's laws are uniform ; and all physical agents obey them perfectly. But moral agents often violate moral law ; and hence an important distinction between moral and physical law appears, in that one is violable, and the other inviolable.

We cannot preserve the analogy between moral and physical law, by referring moral law to the order of sequence between a moral action and its consequences. Moral law is a rule, not for regulating the consequence of an action, but for regulating the action itself ; and

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<sup>1</sup> All physical law refers to sequence, and never to mere mode of existence. The law that a body at rest will continue at rest, unless compelled by some force to change its state, may appear to be an exception. It does not, however, refer to the mere mode of existence, but to the *continuance* of that mode. A simple statement, that the body *is* at rest, will suffice to describe its mode of existence, but it will not express a law of nature. For the latter purpose the words "will continue" are needed ; and these denote sequence when the mode of existence continues the same, as much as if it underwent a change.

the observance or violation of it is complete as soon as the action is performed, and before the consequence follows. The consequences of moral actions follow these actions by divine appointment, as physical effects follow their causes; and are, in the established course of things, inevitable. A man who commits crime has no more reason to expect exemption from its consequences, than one who thrusts his hand into the fire, to expect exemption from burning. If moral law denoted the order of sequence between actions and their consequences, none but God could violate it; since he only can change the order of nature which he has established.

Moral and physical law are not different species of one genus denoted by the general term law; and hence, any attempt to ascertain what moral law is from the use of the term law, in physics, will be liable to mislead. The term law properly belongs to morals, and has in morals its proper signification. In physics it is used in a transferred sense, and strict identity of meaning in the two different uses of it cannot be safely assumed.

Natural philosophy aims to ascertain the laws of nature by classifying its phenomena and observing their order of sequence. But moral philosophy does not ascertain what moral law is, by classifying human actions and their consequences. It views these actions in their relation to God and the moral government which he exercises over the world. The consequences of actions follow by divine appointment, and a knowledge of them may assist us in ascertaining the will of God; but his will binds us irrespective of those consequences; and the investigations of moral philosophy are incomplete until every available means of learning what the will of God is has been duly employed.

Moral science does not teach men their duty, by directing what particular act shall be performed at each moment of life. A master may, in the morning, command his servant what to do at each hour of the day; and the servant may, almost without the exercise of reason, execute the appointed tasks in their chronological order. If there were a science which prescribed men's duties in this manner, so that they could be known at the proper time by the mere exercise of memory, that science would not be a branch of philosophy. But moral science establishes general principles for the regulation of men's conduct, and requires an exercise of reason, in order to apply those principles for determining what is duty in the various circumstances which arise. So natural philosophy ascertains the laws of nature, and foretells by them what effects given causes will produce. It does not foretell these effects chronologically, as independent events; but it arrives at a knowledge of them by a process of reasoning, in which the laws of nature and the operating causes are the data, from which the conclusions are drawn. By a similar process, moral science teaches men their duty. It first establishes general principles according to which men ought to act; and from these it infers the actions which are proper in given circumstances.

The general principles of duty which moral science discovers and applies, are called Moral Law. As the investigations of natural philosophy determine what are the laws of nature, so the investigations of moral philosophy determine what is moral law. A knowledge of nature's laws is necessary, that we may avoid danger from natural causes, or use natural agents for our benefit; and a knowledge of moral law is necessary, that we may determine our duty, and secure the bene-

fits of virtue. The knowledge of duty cannot be scientifically acquired, otherwise than by the study and application of the general principles which constitute moral law, and hence moral science is a branch of philosophy.

## SECTION II. CONNECTION OF MORALITY WITH RELIGION.

WE receive from consciousness our first notions of right and wrong, and of moral obligation; and from the same source we learn, that our knowledge of those subjects is imperfect. Every man's experience testifies that his own reflections have often corrected his moral judgments and feelings; and every one whose education has been wisely directed, is conscious of having received improvement in his moral powers. The past progress teaches the possibility of future advancement, and proves that the highest standard of morals is not in ourselves.

Our moral judgments and feelings may be greatly improved by intercourse with our fellow-men. The order and happiness of society are greatly dependent on good morals; and in every society we may observe the progress and result of an experiment, determining what is right, and demonstrating its beneficial tendency. Our parents teach us what is right; and the obligation of doing right is enforced by their authority. From the home of our childhood, where domestic happiness has illustrated the beneficial tendency of virtue, we go abroad into society, and find another experiment on a larger scale. The general sentiments of mankind, and the laws of civil government, assist further to establish the distinction of right and wrong, and to determine the boundary between them. Here, also, on a larger scale, we see illustrated the beneficial tendency

of right, and the pernicious tendency of wrong; and here our sense of moral obligation becomes strengthened by the popular disapprobation and the civil penalties which are awarded to crime.

In all this progress of moral improvement, we are convinced at every step that the highest possible attainment has not been made. The experiments of human society are incomplete, and the decisions of popular judgment, human legislatures, and civil courts, are all fallible. We want infallible decisions. We want an unerring judge. Here religion comes to our aid and directs us to God, the infinitely wise, and to the perfect moral government which he has instituted over all creatures. He possesses the perfect knowledge of good and evil; and only from the decisions of his infinite mind, can a perfect system of morals be learned.

After we have contemplated God, the Supreme Ruler, and the boundless moral government which he exercises over the universe, if we return to our first conceptions of right and wrong and moral obligation, we may observe that God is the beginning as well as the ending of our morality. The first elements of our moral knowledge are derived from our mental constitution, which proceeded from his creating hand. We learn our first lesson in moral science from God our Creator. The impulsion which our opening minds first felt was the beginning of his moral government over us. Right and wrong, and moral obligation, have no existence apart from God; and the terms have no intelligible meaning, if interpreted without reference to his moral government.

In the view which has been taken, we perceive that there is a necessary connection between morality and religion. We may as well seek for a universe without

a God, as for a system of morality without religion. The moral obligation which our opening minds feel, at the first discovery of our relation to beings around us, attends us throughout life, and is felt at every new discovery in the extent or closeness of our relations. It binds us while under the parental roof, and when we go abroad into the world. It binds us in our relation to earthly fathers, and in the relation which we sustain to our Father in heaven. It binds us to earthly benefactors, and it cannot but bind us to the giver of every good. A morality which affects only our inferior relations, and does not extend to those which are of highest importance, is without system, without completeness, without just claim to our regard. As true morality begins with God, so it ends with God; and morality, in its relation to God, is nothing different from religion. Every moral duty fails to be properly performed, if not performed in obedience to God; and every service rendered to him, is a religious duty.

Religion implies love to God, and the attendant affections found in the sanctified heart. It has an external form, consisting of duties positive and moral. Positive duties are those for which no other reason can be given, than the will of God made known by express precept of revelation. Moral duties are those for which reasons may be assigned, derived from other manifestations of the divine will. The chief concern of moral philosophy is with the duties of the latter class. To these the name *morality* especially applies.

### SECTION III. NATURAL RELIGION.

#### *Its Mode of Teaching.*

THE world abounds with adaptations. The eye is adapted to light, and light exists, reflected to the eye from every object, and deriving supply from the distant

sun, and the more distant stars. The ear is adapted to sound; and sounds float on every breeze, and come, freighted with intelligence, from the lips of all with whom we converse. The mind is capable of knowledge; and boundless science is at hand to fill up this capacity. It is endowed with social affections; and these find occasion for exercise, in the ever present and ever pressing claims of society, which, without our choosing, surrounds us from the cradle. Everywhere throughout nature adaptations are discoverable, in such number and variety, that life might be spent in their contemplation.

As intelligent and voluntary beings, it is in our power to act according to nature, or contrary to nature. We may use our eyes for seeing; or we may close them against the light, or deprive ourselves of the use of them for ever, by putting them out. We may hear with our ears; or we may close them against the intelligence of speech, and the melody of song. A mother may act without natural affection towards her babe; and a man who might bless society by deeds of benevolence, may wage war against it, with fire-brands, arrows and death.

Men who act against nature, suffer penalties for so doing. He who puts out his eyes, loses innumerable enjoyments, and exposes himself to danger from the flood, the fire, and the precipice. He who closes his ears against sound, not only loses the pleasure of melody and harmony, but shuts out warnings which are necessary for his safety, and instructions which are necessary for his success and happiness. The mother who neglects her babe, will suffer self-reproach and remorse; or, if too hardened for this, will bring on herself the execration of mankind. She loses the indescribable pleasure which a virtuous mother feels in the

care and training of her children; and the benefits which such a mother enjoys, in the respect and approbation of the community. The villain who is at war with the interests of society, carries a goading conscience in his breast, which deprives him of peace; and he feels that his own interests are in jeopardy. Society is against him. He knows that even his accomplices in guilt are not to be trusted.

Our condition in life, as intelligent and voluntary beings, is manifestly one of subjection to government. We cannot control the arrangements of nature; but must submit to be controlled by them. The pleasures and pains which result from our actions, are so many rewards and punishments, in view of which we are obliged to act. We are moral, as well as intelligent and voluntary; and as moral beings, we feel the obligation under which we act, to be moral. We feel, not only that we *must*, but that we *ought*. Such is the constitution of our minds, that we are compelled to regard the government under which we find ourselves, as moral. If, in ignorance of God, we ascribe the administration of the government to something which we call nature, our feeling of moral obligation still invests the government, in its relation to us, with a moral character.

In the adaptations of nature, provision is made for human happiness. As intelligent, voluntary, and moral beings, we are bound so to act, in view of these adaptations, as to promote human happiness. If we do not, we oppose the government under which we find ourselves placed, and incur the penalties which it inflicts with a sense of deserving them. We are bound so to use our eyes and ears as to promote our own happiness. The mother is bound to exercise maternal affection for the happiness of her child; and every member of society is bound to promote the happiness of society. The



voice of nature without and within, commands this ; and the obligation to obey is enforced by rewards and punishments, in the external pleasures and pains which actions produce according to the course of nature ; and in the internal pleasures and pains of an approving or condemning conscience.

We are bound to seek our own happiness, in subordination to the happiness of society. The impulse of self-love directs to the former ; the impulse of conscience to the latter ; and we have seen that the impulse of conscience is the most authoritative. The course of nature around us teaches us the same lessons as the voice of conscience within. The happiness of the individual is involved in that of society, and cannot be secured alone ; but the very attempt defeats itself. We learn, therefore, that the moral government under which we are placed, requires an outflow of the affections to the members of society around us ; and such actions, corresponding to these affections, as tend to the happiness of society. This obligation binds us when our knowledge of society is small ; and it extends as our knowledge enlarges. It binds us, at the outset of life, to the household to which we belong. It binds us afterwards to the neighborhood, the country, and the whole family of man. And when we have learned that we are members of a universal society, consisting of God the Creator, and the innumerable creatures that he has made, the obligation expands with the increase of knowledge, and requires the affections to flow forth to this great family.

The voice of nature proclaims the existence of God. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20.

The adaptations of nature display intelligence, and must have proceeded from an intelligent author. Effects which are manifestly the result of wise design, are produced by causes in which the design does not exist. These causes are the effects of other causes equally incapable of the design. We may trace all the sequences of nature backward, to find, in some cause along the line of succession, the designing intelligence which is displayed in the admirable contrivances that everywhere meet our eyes in nature's works, but at no point in the line can we possibly find it. None of nature's causes now operating possess it, and the past were not more intelligent than the present. These contrivances must be referred to an intelligent mind, by which all the sequences of nature have been ordered. The sequences are connected with the moral government under which we find ourselves placed, and which, therefore, must be referred to the same intelligent mind. The government, as administered in the present world, is imperfect. In general it rewards virtue, and punishes vice, but it fails to effect a perfect retribution in innumerable cases. Virtue is often oppressed and suffering in the present life, while vice is prosperous. This can be accounted for only on the supposition that there is a future retribution, in which the administration of justice will be perfected. So much of the administration is seen in the present life, as to assure us that a wise and just government exists; and so manifestly imperfect is the part of it which we see in the present life, that we are compelled to regard it as but the beginning, and to expect the completion of it hereafter. Thus nature teaches that there is a God, wise and just, who has ordered all the sequences of cause and effect, and who exercises a moral government over the world,

imperfect in its present administration, but to be perfected in another life.

When, in the enlargement of its knowledge, the mind attains to the conception of God and his universal dominion, the moral faculties, which began their development at the domestic hearth, find boundless scope for their exercise. The outflowing affection, which conscience then demanded, has opportunity for illimitable expansion; and the same moral obligation which then required love to the household, now requires love to the universal family, and, in the highest degree, to the great Father of all. The morality which nature teaches, when its scope is so enlarged as to include God and his universal dominion, becomes what is called natural religion.

The principle that our own happiness should be made subordinate to the happiness of society, pervades natural religion. It regards us as members of a universal society, over which God presides, and it requires us to act our part in harmony with the arrangements which God has established. It requires our outflowing affection to be fixed supremely on God, the greatest and best of beings. It would be our duty to increase his happiness, were this possible; but, since we cannot add to the fulness of his blessedness, we are bound to delight in it, to approve the scheme of things in which he delights, and to co-operate with all our powers in his wise and benevolent designs. As the mother that neglects her babe, and the son that does not reverence his father, act contrary to nature, so does he act contrary to nature who disobeys God, and refuses to conduct himself in harmony with the arrangements of his government.

Natural religion requires us to seek the happiness of our fellow-creatures associated with us as members of

the universal society. Although we cannot affirm that the production of happiness was the design with which God created the world, we have sufficient proof that it accords with his design. While contrivances adapted to the general diffusion of happiness are visible everywhere in the arrangements of nature, we act contrary to nature if we do not co-operate with the benevolent design in which these contrivances originated. Natural religion requires the exercise of such affections as tend to promote the happiness of all, and the performance of such actions as correspond with these affections.

In applying this rule, to determine the moral quality of any particular action, we ought to consider what would be the effect on the happiness of society, if that mode of action were universal. Sometimes a reason may exist for a peculiar mode of action, when the circumstances are peculiar. The general rule of duty is, to adopt that mode of acting, which, if universally adopted, would promote the happiness of society. If the circumstances are peculiar, it is our duty to adopt that mode of acting which would, if universally adopted in such circumstances, promote the general good.

To exemplify the rule, let us inquire into the moral quality of revenge. As an affection of the mind, does revenge aim at the general good? It seeks personal gratification at the expense of a neighbor's happiness, and is, therefore, wrong. As put forth into action, what would be the effect on society if revenge were universal? If every injury were followed by revenge, blow would succeed to blow, until one of the parties became unable to continue the strife. The obligation to take vengeance would then pass to some friend or relative, whose duty it would be to espouse the quarrel. By this process the peace of a whole community would be destroyed; and the final effect would be a desolating

war. A practical illustration of this may be found in the history of the North American Indians. Among them revenge was thought to be a virtue; and, in consequence, the tribes were found by the Europeans who first visited the country, embroiled in exterminating wars.

Let us, for another example, inquire into the moral quality of drunkenness. From its mischievous effects on the happiness of individuals, and of society, we know that it is criminal; but this criminality is not discoverable in any antecedent mental affection, if viewed apart from a knowledge of the evil consequences resulting. If alcohol were as harmless as water, we might drink it innocently; but our knowledge of its effects warns us against the use of it. The criminality consists in disregarding the warning which nature gives us.

In learning duty from natural religion, caution is needed, lest we make unauthorized conclusions. Although human suffering may, in a general view of it, be ascribed to sin, it cannot be affirmed of each particular pain that it is the penalty for a particular crime. No one will refer the pain of pleurisy to a particular crime which the sufferer has committed. Much suffering results from imprudence, when there is no special criminality; and much from the imprudence or criminality of other persons, over whose conduct the sufferers had no power. It is our duty, as intelligent beings, to study the sequences of nature; and, so far as they can be brought under our control, to give them such direction as will promote happiness. Natural religion holds us responsible for the consequences of our voluntary actions, when these consequences could be foreknown. In some cases, present pain is inflicted for the sake of greater future good which it will accomplish; as when a physician applies a blister to cure disease, or a sur

geon amputates a limb to save life. In such cases, if nature's sequences have been duly studied by the agent, the benevolence of his intention determines the moral character of the action.

*Extent of its Teaching.*

If we include in the teachings of natural religion all the knowledge of morals which may be derived from studying the order of nature, we shall find that it is an abundant source of moral instruction.

1. Natural religion confirms the primary impulse of conscience.

The elementary benevolent affection to which conscience impels, and which conscience approves, tends to the production of happiness. Natural religion teaches that this accords with the will of God, manifested in the benevolent contrivances with which his works abound. The instinctive affection of a mother for her offspring operates, and is approved by conscience, before any judgment is formed of its beneficial tendency. Natural religion confirms this decision of conscience, by showing how greatly society is indebted to this maternal instinct for its happiness and its very existence.

2. Natural religion directs the form which the mental affection shall assume when it is put forth into action.

The elementary affection cannot go abroad, without knowledge of things around us. It cannot be directed to other beings, until their existence is known; and cannot act on them without knowledge of the effects which actions will produce. For this knowledge conscience is indebted to natural religion. This opens the channel in which the affection shall flow; or, rather, it points out the channel which God has opened. Conscience has no original knowledge of human relations, or of the modes in which human happiness may be

affected; but natural religion gives knowledge of the modes in which conscience must act; and, without this knowledge, it cannot act to any definite result.

Persons who have not considered the subject, are not aware how much we are indebted to natural religion for our knowledge of duty. With every movement of the hand, or foot, or tongue, if the happiness of a fellow-creature may be affected by it, some obligation is connected. It is the office of conscience to make us feel this obligation; but natural religion must teach how to fulfil it. All nature is a vast volume spread out before us, from which we may learn our duty; and natural religion teaches us so to read this volume, as to learn from it what is the will of God by which our actions should be regulated.

### 3. Natural religion presents strong motives to duty.

The man who disregards the goadings of conscience, is often deterred from the commission of crime by the external penalties which he must incur. To these, natural religion points; and she teaches to consider these God's penalties for sin, and indications of his displeasure. She teaches that all the sequences of nature are arrangements of God's wisdom, and are connected with the administration of his moral government; that this government extends beyond the present life; and that the penalties which he inflicts in this world, are only the beginning of his righteous retribution. With such instructions natural religion lifts up its warning voice to deter from crime.

### *Its Insufficiency.*

The possession of conscience renders us moral and accountable beings. It binds us to the exercise of right affections, but does not bind to any particular mode of action, until natural religion has added its

teachings. Natural religion, therefore, renders men inexcusable, if they do not improve all the advantages which it offers for attaining to perfect virtue; but it is insufficient to restore fallen man to perfect virtue.

I. The insufficiency of natural religion has been demonstrated by fair experiment.

God has been pleased to leave a large part of the human race to the mere light of nature. The result has been that they have sunk deeper and deeper in vice, and wandered farther and farther from God. Heathen nations have admitted their own degeneracy, and have talked of a golden age long past, in which men conversed with the gods, and walked in the ways of virtue. Political institutions, which in their origin were found sufficient to restrain from grosser vices, grow old and decay; and the barriers which they present, become too feeble to resist the lawless passions of men. Religion becomes more and more degraded. The corrupt imaginations of men form deities who are monsters of vice, and invent abominable rites for their worship. To whatever part of the heathen world we may go, we shall find such a state of society as will sadly demonstrate the insufficiency of natural religion.

It cannot be alleged that the experiment has failed, for want of intelligence in the people. In ancient Greece and Rome, a high degree of intelligence existed. Many of the arts were carried to a degree of perfection which has never since been surpassed. Sages appeared, whose wisdom was admired by the multitude, and many philosophers taught lessons of morality to their disciples. But with all these advantages, the nations were grossly idolatrous and vicious. The lessons of morality wrought no reform, and the very teachers were slaves to the prevalent corruption. Here



natural religion enjoyed a fair opportunity, and here its insufficiency was fully demonstrated.

II. Natural religion is defective in its mode of teaching.

Natural religion teaches by experience. We cannot know the effect of an action on human happiness, until it has been tried ; and frequently a long course of trial is necessary. Sometimes, to give a complete demonstration, the experiment needs to be made on a broad scale, affecting the manners and prosperity of entire nations. This mode of instruction is too slow for depraved man, whose appetites and passions are clamorous for immediate gratification. He acts under their impulse, and the habit of vice is formed before these instructions can avail.

The instructions of natural religion are not sufficiently impressive, to arrest men who are going headlong in a course of vice. It draws its motives from things unseen and future, and the knowledge of these is obtained by processes of reasoning through which they are but dimly discovered. On the other hand, the objects which tempt to present gratification, are directly at hand, and distinctly perceived by the senses. The indulgence of the present moment is often determined on, at the risk of future happiness in this world ; and much more is happiness in the life to come risked, for the sake of continued enjoyment in this life.

Nature itself teaches that another mode of instruction is necessary. Children learn much from experience ; but parental affection does not leave them wholly to this means of obtaining knowledge. Language is employed as a vehicle of instruction, and the knowledge which the parent has acquired is transfused into the mind of the child, to aid his imperfect experience.

Such aid nature has taught men to expect from the benevolent Father of all. The idea of revelation from the gods, found entrance into heathen minds; and heathen lawgivers, availing themselves of it, pretended to give their laws for the government of the people by instruction from the gods. Men, groaning under the miseries which idolatry and vice had brought on them, have longed for some revelation from heaven, to teach them the way to happiness.

A revelation has been granted to mankind, and this fact proves further the insufficiency of natural religion. In the inscrutable wisdom of God, it was withheld until the insufficiency of natural religion was fully demonstrated; and it then introduced a new mode of teaching adapted to the wants of mankind. "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."<sup>1</sup> We learn from this revelation, that even in primeval innocence the parents of our race were not left wholly to natural religion, but had their Maker's will further made known to them by express command. Much more do we, their fallen sons, need clear instruction directly from heaven; and, when granted, we ought to receive it with overflowing gratitude, and prize it as our richest treasure.

#### SECTION IV. REVELATION.

##### *Its Relation to Natural Religion.*

THE Bible is a revelation from God, supplying the defects of natural religion. It was given by inspiration of God, and is, therefore, to be received as God's word addressed to men, and an infallible directory in all

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 21.

things of which it treats. The proof that the Bible is the word of God may be studied in works on the evidences of Christianity. A single argument of great force in support of this truth may be drawn from the harmony of the Bible with natural religion, and the adaptedness of its doctrines to supply the defects of nature's teachings, and to develop and perfect the moral powers of man.

1. The revelation made in the Bible presupposes and confirms the teachings of natural religion.

The Bible opens with the declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The existence of God is presupposed. The narrative proceeds as if this were an admitted and familiar truth. The attributes of God, so far as they may be learned from our best study of nature, are all taught with clearness in the volume of inspiration. The distinction of right and wrong, the moral government of God, the immortality of the soul, and the retributions of the future world, truths which nature teaches with obscurity, are brought forth into clear light by the Bible. The obligation of directing our affections outward, and fixing them on God and our fellow-creatures, is taught by express precepts.

Since God speaks to us in nature, if the Bible contradicted the teachings of nature, there would be evidence that they have not proceeded from the same author. But nature and the Bible, so far as they speak on the same subject, always speak in perfect harmony. Moreover, the Bible expressly refers to the teachings of nature, and establishes their authority. Paul asks, "Doth not even nature itself teach?"<sup>1</sup> and Job directs, "Ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 14.

fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.”<sup>1</sup> David describes the office of natural religion in these words: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> And he indicates the connection and harmony of revelation, with the teachings of nature, by adding, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”<sup>3</sup>

2. The Bible reveals clearly what natural religion teaches obscurely; and reveals many important truths which nature cannot teach.

Natural religion teaches us to look through the works of creation and providence with the eye of the understanding, and see God as he appears behind them; but revelation brings him forth openly, and presents him addressing our external eyes and ears in his holy word. Nature teaches the immortality of the soul by obscure processes of reasoning; but the Bible brings life and immortality to light. Nature rather suspects and fears, than believes and knows, that there will be a future retribution; but the Bible shows us the Judge, the great white throne, the opened books, and the assembled multitude. We learn our duty from nature by slow deductions and long observations; but the Bible brings us at once to the base of Sinai to hear God’s commands, or directs us to read them as inscribed by his finger on the tables of stone.

Nature may teach that man is a depraved creature, but it cannot direct to any remedy for his depravity—any means of healing for his moral disease. It may teach that man is guilty, and under the condemnation of God; but it cannot assure the anxious soul that there

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<sup>1</sup> Job xii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xix. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xix. 7.

is forgiveness with God ; and cannot utter in his ears the proclamation of peace. It cannot say, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom."<sup>1</sup> Natural religion may exhibit the moral governor of the universe, with the flaming sword of justice in his hand ; but of God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, it knows nothing, and can teach nothing.

3. The Bible presents motives to virtue far more powerful than those of natural religion.

Natural religion moves men by rewards and punishments, which appear distant and uncertain. In the present life, virtue is often afflicted, and vice prosperous ; and, therefore, motives drawn merely from the present life, operate doubtfully and feebly ; and natural religion cannot look into the world to come with clear and unobstructed vision, but sees through a glass darkly. The Bible places the Judge at the door, and gives men a deeply impressive knowledge of his terrors. It teaches, moreover, that there is no hope of escape to those who continue in transgression ; for "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing ;"<sup>2</sup> and rocks and mountains will not be able to hide the sinner from his omniscient eye.

The Bible presents a most powerful motive, of which natural religion knows nothing. It leads men to the cross of Christ, and exhibits to them the love of God in the gift of his Son ; the love of Christ in giving his life a ransom ; the demerit of sin in his unparalleled sufferings ; and the grace which has provided salvation at a sacrifice so immense. Here the heart feels an impulse beyond all the powers of nature. "The love of Christ constraineth us."<sup>3</sup> "The goodness of God

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<sup>1</sup> Job. xxxiii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Eccl. xii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14.

leadeth thee to repentance.”<sup>1</sup> Hearts, which the thunders of Sinai could not shake, have been moved by the groans of Calvary. If the moral power of the cross fails, no motive can be effectual.

### *The Two Testaments.*

The Bible consists of two parts. The Old Testament contains the revelations made to Moses and succeeding prophets until the time of Christ, and preserved in writing by the Hebrew nation. The New Testament contains the revelations made by the immediate followers of Christ, and transmitted in writing by Christians of the ages following. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language; the New Testament in Greek.

In the first ages of the world, the art of alphabetic writing was unknown; and revelations from God to individuals were perpetuated by oral tradition. The longevity of the patriarchs rendered this mode of transmission less uncertain, than it would now be, since the length of human life has been diminished. The art of alphabetic writing was introduced about the time of Moses; and was immediately employed to give a stable form to revelation. If this art was not itself a revelation from God, as some have supposed, it was introduced, by a wise ordering of Providence, at the very time when it was needed, for the great purpose of giving permanence to the revelations, designed for the benefit of mankind through all time; and Moses was commanded to use it for this purpose.

The first five books of the inspired volume were written chiefly by Moses, and are called the Pentateuch. They contain an account of the creation, and a brief

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 4.

history of the world, to the death of Moses, so far as it was appropriate to the design of a revelation from God.

This first part of the Holy Scriptures records the fall of our first parents; the great wickedness of their descendants; their destruction by the flood on account of their sins; and the separation of Abraham's family from the rest of mankind, for the establishment of a pure religion. Among the descendants of Abraham, a society was organized for the worship of God, called the Congregation of the Lord. For their use God instituted numerous ceremonies of religious worship; and to them he committed his written revelation. This revelation contains a code of laws, consisting of moral, ceremonial, and judicial precepts. The moral law is chiefly contained in the decalogue or ten commandments, which were delivered audibly by the voice of God from Sinai, and were engraven by the finger of God on two tables of stone. The ceremonial law prescribed the rites of religious worship, which were to be observed until the time of Christ, and which prefigured a better dispensation of religion then to be introduced. This law was given to the Israelites as a worshipping congregation. The judicial law was given to them as a nation, and served as their civil code. It was never designed to be obligatory on other nations, except so far as the principles of justice embodied in it are applicable to their circumstances.

The remaining books of the Old Testament consist chiefly of historical, devotional, and prophetic writings, which were of great use to the pious Hebrews, and are profitable to men of all nations, who study them with a desire to know and do the will of God.

The system of moral law revealed in the Old Testament, leaves men under condemnation for their trans-

gressions, and exposed to the wrath of God. Intimations were given in these ancient Scriptures, that God had designs of mercy for our fallen race; but the clear revelation of his gracious purpose was reserved for the dispensation which began with the coming of Christ, and which is made known to us in the Scriptures of the New Testament. From these we learn that the wisdom of God has devised a method of salvation by grace, adapted to the condition of fallen man. Justification is granted to all who repent of sin, and believe in Christ. To them, the obedience and death of Christ are reckoned, as if they had personally obeyed the law, and suffered its penalty. Christ is to them the end of the law for righteousness, and in him they have the promise of eternal life.

The general distinction between the Old Testament and the New is, that the former was a dispensation of law, and the latter is a dispensation of grace. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> Yet the Old Testament made sufficient revelation of grace, to guide the saints of that dispensation to heaven; and the New Testament, on the other hand, sheds much additional light on the path of duty. It confirms those precepts of the former dispensation, which were adapted to general use; and, adopting the same principles of morality on which they were founded, unfolds them more clearly, and gives them a wider application.

The Bible is a rule of duty. In the words of Paul, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John i. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii, 16, 17.



All the teachings of revelation may be considered a source of instruction in righteousness, and used as a directory in good works. The inspired volume addresses the understanding; but the effect of its truth extends further, sanctifying the heart, and producing externally the fruits of holy obedience. It teaches duty in respect of both internal affections and external conduct; and none of its instructions are properly received, if they fail to produce holiness of heart and life.

The Bible doctrine concerning God, and his works of creation and providence, is adapted to increase our love to him, and our delight in the manifestations of his perfections. In its doctrine concerning the fall and present state of man, we may learn our depravity and condemnation, and may find incitements to deep, heartfelt repentance toward God. The doctrine concerning Christ, presents him as our Mediator and Saviour, and calls forth the exercise of faith in him. The doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit, leads to constant prayer for his influences, and a constant committing of ourselves to his guidance. The doctrine concerning the grace of God in our salvation, draws forth our gratitude for the unspeakable benefits bestowed. And the doctrine concerning the future world, leads us to resist the temptations of the present, and to prepare with diligence, watchfulness, and sobriety, for the eternal world to which we are fast hastening.

The devotional portion of the Scriptures is of great utility in the cultivation of pious feeling. The book of Psalms especially has been found by good men an invaluable aid in the duties of both public and private worship. We may draw near to God with the pious breathings expressed in these sacred odes, and experience delight in holding communion with the Father of

our spirits. The elevating influence of this intercourse with heaven, will tend to preserve us from sinking under the burdens of life ; or becoming immersed in worldly cares and pursuits.

The historical parts of the Bible unite with the prophetical, in furnishing proof of its divine origin. The miracles which it records, and which are as indubitably attested as any facts of history, affix to its revelations the seal of omnipotence, and give firm foundation to our faith. In the sacred history, we have illustrious examples for our imitation, in the lives of pious men, and especially in the life of Jesus Christ. We have, moreover, a record of God's dealings with men, good and bad, unfolding the principles of his moral government, and teaching us how to conduct in order to secure his favor. The history of the labors and sufferings by which Christianity was propagated, give important instruction to ministers of the gospel, and to all who desire to be useful in extending the true religion.

The prophetical portions of the Bible furnish proof of its divine origin, by means of their fulfilment ; and they serve in this way to increase our faith. They open to our view the designs of mercy yet to be accomplished ; and thereby encourage the exercise of hope, and stimulate our efforts in the cause of Christ, with assured confidence that our labor will not be in vain. These Scripture prophecies are moreover interspersed with commands, exhortations, and warnings, which are greatly useful to direct us in the way of duty, and further our progress.

Besides the general instructions in duty to be obtained from the Holy Scriptures, there are express commands binding to the exercise of particular affections, and the performance of particular actions. Two

precepts are given, on which we are taught that all the law depends: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The two tables of stone given to Moses at Sinai contained expansions of these two precepts. The duty of love to God was spread out into four commandments written on the first table, and requiring that we shall have no other god than Jehovah—that we shall not worship images—that we shall not take the Lord's name in vain—and that we shall remember the Sabbath. The duty of love to our neighbor is expanded into six commandments, which were written on the second table, and which require that we shall honor our parents—that we shall not kill—that we shall not commit adultery—that we shall not steal—that we shall not bear false witness—and that we shall not covet. The ten commandments which have been referred to, were given to the Israelites, and formed a part of God's covenant with them as his peculiar people; but they were given to them as men, and are adapted to the relations which men of all nations and ages bear to God and one another, and they are therefore obligatory on all men. In writing to the Romans,<sup>1</sup> Paul quotes several of these precepts, and recognises the authority and obligation of the law which contained them; and in writing to the Ephesians,<sup>2</sup> he quotes the fifth precept, and urges its obligation as one of the commandments. These epistles were written after the abrogation of the old covenant, and were addressed to Gentiles. We have proof, therefore, that the ten commandments are now binding on men of all nations.

The Scriptures are so given as not to supersede, but to require and encourage the exercise of our intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 8, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 2, 3.

and moral powers. Though their instructions are clearer than those of natural religion, they nevertheless require to be studied, and the duty of studying them is enforced by divine command.<sup>1</sup> We are not to hold ourselves bound to do everything that has ever been commanded to any one. Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son, and the Israelites were commanded to destroy the ancient inhabitants of Palestine; but we are not bound to sacrifice our sons, or to destroy the present inhabitants of the holy land. On the other hand, we are not to hold ourselves at liberty to disregard all commands not expressly addressed to us, for no man on earth can find a command in Scripture addressed to him by name. But commands are addressed to men in particular relations, and these bind men who sustain the same relations. Other commands are addressed to men as men, and these bind all men. Some commands were given for special reasons, and these bind in cases to which the reasons are applicable. Any one who will study the Scriptures with a sincere desire to know his duty can scarcely fail to learn it. Men err on this point by neglecting the careful study of God's word, or by studying it to find out justifications or excuses for doing what they prefer, rather than directions for doing that which is pleasing to God. They err also by directing their inquiries to outward acts exclusively, overlooking repentance, faith, love, and other affections of the heart, which are duties of greater importance, in the sight of God, than any external service.

SECTION V. KNOWLEDGE MADE EFFECTUAL  
BY DIVINE INFLUENCE.

In the preceding discussions we have seen the insufficiency of conscience and natural religion. Does reve-

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<sup>1</sup> John v. 39.

lation supply all the defects of conscience and natural religion, and afford all the aid that is necessary in order to elevate fallen man to perfect virtue?

1. The revelation made in the Old Testament was proved, by fair experiment, to be insufficient.

Previous to the introduction of the gospel dispensation, the necessity of its provisions was demonstrated by two experiments. One of these was made in the heathen world, demonstrating the insufficiency of natural religion; the other was made in the nation of Israel, from the time of Moses to the coming of Christ. The Congregation of the Lord was instituted with divinely-prescribed rites of religious worship. God entered into a special covenant with them, and committed to them his word of revelation, in which his will was clearly made known. Prophets were sent to them from time to time, with such further communications from heaven as their circumstances required. All God's dealings with them manifested his special care, and reminded them perpetually of their accountability to him. They had the advantage "much every way, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God;"<sup>1</sup> and they were not left, like the surrounding heathen nations, to the obscure light of natural religion. But all these advantages were, on trial, proved to be insufficient. The people abused their high privileges, rejected the authority of God, killed the prophets whom he sent, and crucified the Messiah raised up for their deliverance. God himself declared the experiment to be a failure, found fault with the covenant, abolished it, and instituted the new covenant of the gospel dispensation. In the wisdom of God, the abolished dispensation was preparatory to the new, and demonstrated the necessity of a better covenant,

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 2.

established on better promises ; a covenant in which the law would not be given in external revelation only, but would be written in the heart, so as effectually to keep the people in the service of God.<sup>1</sup>

2. The New Testament does not claim, for the mere letter of its revelation, superior efficacy to that of the Old Testament.

Paul declares the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation ;<sup>2</sup> but he teaches also that the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which Timothy had studied from his youth, were able to make wise unto salvation.<sup>3</sup> David ascribed a saving efficacy to the imperfect revelation which existed in his day. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."<sup>4</sup> In contrasting the former dispensation with the present, Paul accounts for the inefficacy of the Old Testament, not from the inferiority of its revelation, but from the fact that the people read Moses with a veil on their hearts.<sup>5</sup> The ministration of the letter left the law, engraven on stone, a mere external revelation ; and the word of the New Testament is as unprofitable as that of the Old, unless it enters the heart, and dwells there in its sanctifying power.

3. The saving efficacy of revelation is attributed in the Bible to the accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament clearly teaches this doctrine. "Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase."<sup>6</sup> "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things," &c.<sup>7</sup> "My preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit."<sup>8</sup> "Not in word only, but in power

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. viii. 6-13.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 16.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.    <sup>4</sup> Ps. xix. 7.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 15.    <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 7.    <sup>7</sup> Acts xvi. 14.    <sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 4.

and the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."<sup>2</sup> Even under the Old Testament, the saints understood and felt the necessity of the Spirit's influence. Wherefore David prayed earnestly, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me."<sup>3</sup> Numerous passages of the Old Testament speak of God's bestowing of the Holy Spirit, for the sanctification and salvation of his people; and a prophecy of Joel foretold the wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which, on the day of Pentecost, gave efficacy to the preaching of the apostles.<sup>4</sup> Christians, with one accord, pray for the Holy Spirit to render the preaching of the gospel effectual; and the whole tenor of their devotions, both public and private, recognises the necessity of his influence.

4. The original defect in the impulse of conscience renders the influence of the Holy Spirit necessary.

If the original impulse of conscience were sufficiently strong to control our lower impulses, and if we obeyed it throughout life, we should live in perfect virtue. The discoveries of natural and revealed religion would be welcomed, and all our powers would be given to the service of God. But we begin life with an advantage in favor of the lower impulses, and this advantage the power of habit is ever increasing. Conscience cannot of itself regain its lost dominion, and natural religion cannot give it the needed aid. The Old Testament tried its power without success, and the New Testament acknowledges its impotence, if not accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. The original defect in the impulse of conscience leaves men under the dominion of the lower propensities, that is, renders them carnal; and, to remedy this defect, they need a change which

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. i. 5.    <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 6.    <sup>3</sup> Ps. li. 11.    <sup>4</sup> Acts ii. 16.

is appropriately called new birth, new creation, renovation, regeneration. To effect this change, divine power is needed; and it is accordingly ascribed to the Spirit of God.

Natural religion can give no assurance of divine forgiveness. The Old Testament taught that there is forgiveness with God,<sup>1</sup> and obscurely exhibited, in its sacrifices, the redemption by Christ through which forgiveness is bestowed. The New Testament opens the way of salvation clearly, and gives full assurance of pardon to all who seek it by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Natural religion can teach the need of internal sanctification, but it cannot discover any sufficient means for effecting it. The Old Testament obscurely taught the doctrine of sanctification by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, but the New Testament reveals this doctrine fully, and teaches us on what power to rely for effecting this great change within us. The New Testament reveals God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, working for man and in man the great salvation which he needs, and gives assurance of this salvation to every penitent believer. The New Testament revelation connects moral science with gospel theology, and perfects the system. As there cannot be pure morality without religion, so there cannot be a perfect system of moral science without theology. A system of moral science which has no place for the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, should be classed with the inefficacious systems of ethics taught by heathen philosophers, and should not satisfy the Christian student.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxx. 4.



## CHAPTER VI.

### GENERAL RULES OF CONDUCT.

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THE following rules of conduct may be deduced from the foregoing discussions.

#### RULE I. STUDY THOROUGHLY THE LAWS OF PURE MORALITY.

WE spend years of laborious study, that we may learn how to speak and write in the best manner. We toil for this purpose at grammars and lexicons, and wear out our eyes in reading authors of classic elegance. All this is done that we may speak and write well; but how much more important it is, that we should act well! We learn arithmetic and book-keeping to render ourselves good accountants, and we study political economy, that we may apply our accountant skill to the acquisition of wealth; but what wealth is of so much value as the inestimable treasure of an unsullied character, the priceless gem of a pure conscience! We study the rules of politeness, that we may pass in society with ease and grace; but men of polished and fascinating manners, with corrupt hearts, are whited sepulchres, beautiful indeed without, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. They are loathsome and pestilential. We should not desire to be like them, but should labor to acquire the grace of genuine virtue, the fascination of uncounterfeited benevolence.

Let us study morality in books and in men; in the

written and unwritten lives of those whose virtues have adorned society, in the approbation and homage of mankind for genuine goodness; but, above all, in the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us "thoroughly furnished unto every good work." Let us study morality with more intense interest than anything else. Let us study it for the management of the heart, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears. Let us study it in the daily business of life, in the family, in retirement, and on our knees: so study it, that it shall become our most familiar science, and that the fluency and propriety with which we speak, shall not exceed the promptness and correctness with which we determine how to act.

RULE II. IN DELIBERATING ON AN ACTION,  
INQUIRE CHIEFLY INTO ITS MORAL  
QUALITY.

THE Great Teacher asked, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"<sup>1</sup> This inquiry should be before us, whenever we are deliberating how to act, and the proper answer to it should govern all our decisions. Every wrong action tends to corrupt the character and ruin the soul. No evil can befall us so great as to do wrong, and no benefit arising from an evil act, can countervail the mischief and damage accruing. We ought, therefore, in deliberating on the performance of any act, to inquire with chief solicitude, not whether it will secure pleasure, honor, or wealth, but whether it is right. This question, first in importance, should be first in the order of time. We should ask it before the temptation has excited the imagination and biassed the judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 26.

We should firmly disregard every other inquiry, until this question has been thoroughly investigated, and fully and finally decided.

RULE III. ALWAYS ACT CONSCIENTIOUSLY.

NEVER do what conscience *forbids*. If we slight its admonitions, they will become less urgent, less loud, until its voice will at length be unheard. A little indulgence may be proposed, and appetite, passion, or self-love may plead that it is a little thing; but it is never a little thing to wound the conscience. Drive not this faithful friend to cease his remonstrance, for his silence is the token of perdition.

Never decline to do what enlightened conscience *commands*. The road of virtue is sometimes up a rugged ascent; but we must not hesitate to climb it. We should pursue duty at every expense, and at every hazard. He who hesitates to-day, may stand still to-morrow, and go backward the day following. If we would be virtuous, truly and decidedly virtuous, we must cultivate the habit of attending promptly to every suggestion of the internal monitor; and no dangers, fears, or enticements, should cause us to deviate in the slightest degree from the onward path, or abate the speed of our progress.

Avoid action, if conscience is *in doubt*. Even those whose ability to form correct moral judgments is greatest, are sometimes in doubt. No one should do anything, the propriety of which he doubts, unless he still more doubts the propriety of delay. Every one should seek to prepare himself for the prompt decision of cases which do not admit deliberation, and errors of haste are often the result of previous deliberate negligence.

RULE IV. PRACTISE FREQUENT, STRICT,  
AND IMPARTIAL SELF-EXAMINATION.

OUR present life is preparatory for that which is to come; and every day of life prepares for those which follow it. The experience of yesterday fits us for the duties of to-morrow; and we should study it for this end. Have we done right? We should mark the pleasure which self-approbation brings, and resolve to persevere in the right. Have we done wrong? We should submit patiently to the pain of remorse, and penitently resolve to do so no more. We should diligently search into the causes of our error, and determine to watch against the temptations by which we have been overcome. If others have suffered by our wrong, our penitence is never complete, until we have resolved to make restitution. Above all, it is never complete, until we have contemplated our sin as committed against God, and humbled ourselves before him on account of it. In this manner, the penitent king of Israel confessed to God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."<sup>1</sup>

Our self-examination should be so frequent, as to become habitual; so strict, as to permit no thought, word, or action, to escape its watchful scrutiny; and so impartial, that we can invite the search of the omniscient Judge. To assist our impartiality, we may often avail ourselves of complaints and accusations made against us by enemies; or the rebukes of faithful friends, whose censures ought to be far more acceptable to our ears, than the voice of flattery.

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. li. 4.

RULE V. THESE RULES SHOULD BE OBSERVED  
IN THE FEAR OF GOD, WITH HUMBLE TRUST  
IN CHRIST, AND PRAYERFUL DEPENDENCE  
ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

RELIGION is the perfection of morality, and the truth and excellence of the Christian religion are demonstrated, by the perfect adaptedness of its doctrines to develop and perfect the moral powers of man. To estimate the human mind aright, we must contemplate its moral powers, in their susceptibility of indefinite development, and in their relation to the moral government of God, and the retributions of eternity. These subjects must be viewed in the light which the Gospel of Christ sheds on them. Moral philosophy has performed its best office, when it has brought us to the feet of Christ, to receive his instructions, to obey his commands, and to trust in his blood and righteousness.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DUTIES TO GOD.

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#### SECTION I. LOVE AND REVERENCE.

THE chief of all duties is thus commanded: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."<sup>1</sup> Natural religion leads us to the knowledge of this duty through a long process of reasoning; but in revelation, God issues his command directly, and in terms which all may understand. Some difficulty may arise in defining repentance, faith, and other exercises of the mind; but no one needs to be told what love is. Some minds are capable of stronger affections than others; and this precept, allowing for the diversity, measures the extent of the obligation by the extent of the capacity. The precept accommodates itself to persons of feeble mind, and spreads its obligation over the most powerful intellects. To love with all the heart, is the simple comprehensive requirement adapted to every case.

The object of our supreme love is near at hand. Our eyes do not see his spiritual essence; but it is equally true, that they do not see the minds with which we hold familiar intercourse in social relations, and toward which our warm affections flow. The father and mother whom we love, are not the mere outward forms

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. vi. 5.

which our eyes see, but the invisible minds that care for us, and love us. Though the minds themselves are unseen, their love and tender care are incessantly manifested in words and actions, which could originate in nothing but parental affection. We have as thorough conviction that the minds of our parents exist, and are filled with affection for us, as we could have if their minds and their affections were visible or tangible things. So we may have thorough conviction that God exists, and that he is infinitely benevolent, though our eyes have never seen his essence, and our hands have never felt the throbbings of his kind heart. Hence, the invisibility of God is no obstacle to the exercise of our love to him. He may be seen in every object that we behold; perceived in every movement of nature; and felt in every enjoyment of life. The heavens, the earth, the mountains, the vales, the forests, and the grassy plains, are all full of the Deity. The rising sun, the fanning breeze, and the flowing stream, are moved by his hand, and guided by his unseen mind. His kindness supplies our food, and raiment, and health, and the blessings of every passing hour. If, seeing all these manifestations of God, and receiving all these blessings from him, we live without love to him, we are wholly inexcusable. The brutes that perish may live in disregard of God; but for intelligent, moral creatures so to live, is highly criminal, and must be highly offensive to their Maker. If earthly parents would be grieved by the continued indifference and neglect of the children whom they love and provide for, much more must our heavenly Father be grieved and offended, if we meet him at every turn of life, and take from his hand every good that we enjoy, without acknowledging his presence and goodness, and giving him the affections of our hearts.

We are under obligation to delight in the happiness of God. Isaac loved savory meat,<sup>1</sup> for the sake of the gratification which it afforded him: and such love may be innocently exercised toward material objects; but virtuous love cannot be exercised towards sentient objects, without regard to their pleasure or happiness. Virtuous love tends to diffuse happiness, where it can be increased, and to delight in it, where it already exists. God's happiness is incapable of increase; but, if we love him, we delight in contemplating his blessedness, and the incessant flow of it into the creatures who are deriving enjoyment from his inexhaustible fulness. The heart that does not delight in the Lord, would dry up this fountain of good, which supplies every stream of happiness on earth, and all the bliss of heaven.

We are under obligation to delight in the attributes of God. God is not a mere fountain of happiness, supplying the universe with enjoyment. When he created man in his image, he made him not sentient merely, but also intelligent and moral. Being endowed with such a nature, we ought to understand and approve the character of God. We cannot love with all the heart, if the intellectual and moral powers are not brought into exercise; but this cannot be, if his character is such that the streams of happiness flowing from him are wild torrents, rushing without guidance and control. We are formed capable of understanding, to some extent, those attributes of the divine nature which regulate every outflow from its fulness; and we cannot love God as he requires, without approving and delighting in these attributes. We must rejoice that God reigns, and that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. We must approve the principles of his

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxvii. 4.



moral government, and desire its perpetuity and universal prevalence. We must from the heart pray, "Thy kingdom come."

We are under obligation to delight in the execution of God's will. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."<sup>1</sup> He "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."<sup>2</sup> God's will accords with the perfections of his nature; and these are displayed when his will is executed. It is impossible to delight in his perfections, without delighting in the execution of his will. He who loves God with all the heart, prays with all the heart, "Thy will be done."

Love, exercised towards equals and dependants, may assume the form of familiar fondness; but, as exercised towards the infinite God, it assumes the form which is appropriately denoted by the word *reverence*. A sense of God's great superiority mingles with the emotion of love; producing humility in the contemplation of ourselves, and reverence in the contemplation of God. We may revere fellow-men, whom we acknowledge to be our superiors. Respect is paid to men of age, men of power, men of purity. But if hoary hairs entitle men to reverence, much more is reverence due to the Ancient of Days, who existed ages of ages before any creature was brought into being. If reverence is due to mighty kings, who rule over large empires, and command the movements of vast armies; much more is it due to the King of kings, who governs the universe, at whose command the heavenly hosts fly in swift obedience, and whose will all the forces of nature obey. If we revere holy men, clothed with vestments of spotless purity; much more should we, with the angels who worship near

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<sup>1</sup> Dan. iv. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 11.

the throne, bow in profound reverence, and, vailing our faces, cry, "Holy! holy! holy! is the Lord of hosts!"<sup>1</sup>

The reverence which has been described, is frequently denoted in the Scriptures by the term *fear*: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."<sup>2</sup> "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."<sup>3</sup> There is a fear which is inconsistent with love. Of this it is said, "Perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment."<sup>4</sup> This servile fear is consistent with the greatest depravity; for, "the devils believe and tremble."<sup>5</sup> But the fear of God which the Holy Scriptures command, is filial reverence, a reverence, similar to that which a dutiful son feels towards a father whom he delights to honor and obey. This fear of God produces adoration, and is indispensably necessary in all acceptable worship and service. It is hence properly called the "beginning of wisdom."

The religion of the heathen is not founded on love and reverence for their deities. Indeed the deities whom they worship are not worthy of love and reverence, the heathens themselves being judges. The gods have been created by the depraved imaginations of men, and even heathen morality has reprobated the characters and actions attributed to them. But long before the heathen poets sung of their gods, the true God commanded the love and reverence of his creatures; and a religion founded on this requirement, differs from all other religions in the world, and contains internal proof that it is the true religion. It is a fact which infidelity cannot deny, that the precept requiring supreme love to God, is found in the oldest book in the world. As there

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vi. 3.   <sup>2</sup> Prov. ix. 10.   <sup>3</sup> Ecc. xii. 13.   <sup>4</sup> 1 John iv. 18.  
<sup>5</sup> James ii. 19.

found, it claims to have come from heaven. What other origin could it have had? Any one who will attentively and honestly pursue this single inquiry, may find in it alone satisfactory proof that the Bible is what it claims to be, the book of God.

#### SECTION II. OBEDIENCE.

SUPREME love to God implies delight in the execution of his will. It is not enough that God himself does his own pleasure in heaven and earth; and that virtuous creatures are executing his will; but, if we love him supremely, we cannot be satisfied to be inactive. We must co-operate with God and his virtuous creatures, in doing what pleases him. We cannot delight in his happiness, without desiring to do that which gives him pleasure; and we cannot delight in his perfections, without desiring to do that which accords with these perfections.

The powers with which God has endowed us, are adapted to action; and it was his design that they should be employed in action. He made them, and preserves them, and has a perfect and absolute right of property in them. He has the highest right to command their services; and we are bound, under the strongest obligation possible, to employ them in his service. He has a perfect right to assign us our place in his dominions, and to prescribe our duties; and we are under the strongest possible obligation, to take the assigned place, and perform the prescribed duties, in the exercise of supreme love to him. Such obedience is rendered by the inhabitants of heaven, and makes heaven a place of order and bliss. We ought to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven;"<sup>1</sup> and, if we act in

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 10.

harmony with this prayer, our powers will be employed in doing the will of God, and our obedience will harmonize with that which prevails in the high and holy place.

Our obedience should be from the heart. Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."<sup>1</sup> And to do the will of God ought to be *our* highest enjoyment. It is not enough that we perform, with reluctance, or cold indifference, the outward acts which God requires. If we do not delight in the service, the Searcher of hearts sees through the outward form, and abhors the service to which the heart is not given. God is not deceived. Splendid services are a mockery; and costly oblations a cheat. God requires the heart; and without it, no service can be acceptable in his sight.

Our obedience should be perpetual. One day in seven has been specially consecrated to the worship and service of God; but every day, every hour, every moment, belongs to him, and should be spent in accordance with his will. In the sanctuary, in the closet, and in the daily secular pursuits of life, God is present with us, and worthy of our supreme love; and, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should act under a sense of obligation to him, and with a view to his approbation. Our constant inquiry should be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"<sup>2</sup> And in every concern of life, in our general plans, and in our particular actions, we fail in duty, if we cannot refer everything to the will of God, and act with a sincere desire to please him in all things.

Our obedience should be universal. If love to God reigns in the heart, every affection, every thought,

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<sup>1</sup> John iv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 6.

every imagination, will be in subjection to the divine will. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak words well pleasing to God. Every act, in which any member of the body is employed, will be directed with pure intent to the fulfilment of God's will. If God requires some arduous service, the whole man, body and spirit, will be given up to this service without reserve; and if God commands the tithing of mint, the smallness of the service will never be made a plea for disobedience. Whether God commands to govern an empire, or to give a piece of bread to a suffering Lazarus, it will be our delight to obey.

Our obedience should be unhesitating. When Paul was called into the service of the Christian ministry, he conferred not with flesh and blood.<sup>1</sup> The like promptness should appear in all our obedience. If appetite and passion should urge delay, for the sake of present gratification, our firm purpose should be undisturbed by their clamor. We must learn to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. If self-love should urge that the loss of comfort, health, or life, is too great a sacrifice to be made for the sake of pleasing God, we must deny self, and remember that we are not our own. No enticements, however strong, no threats, however formidable, should cause a moment's delay in executing the will of God.

### SECTION III. GRATITUDE.

WE love and honor good and great men, from whom we have received no personal kindness. On the same principle, we ought to love and reverence God, apart from all consideration of the benefits received from him. But a strong additional incentive to love is fur-

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 16.

nished by the blessings which he confers on us ; and in view of these, love assumes the form of gratitude.

Gratitude implies a sense of intended kindness. The fire that warms us, does us a kindness ; but we are not grateful to it, because it warms without intention. But God's favors are intentionally bestowed. They come from his benevolence ; and are, therefore, adapted to awaken gratitude in our hearts.

God has surrounded us with objects adapted to give pleasure to our senses, and has so constituted us that we are capable of receiving this pleasure. Much of it comes in our way without being sought, and meets us in the path of life which we are obliged to tread. The food which we must eat in order to sustain life is made sweet to the taste. The light by which our steps must be guided is made pleasant to the eyes. Every sense is made an inlet of pleasure not necessary to our being, but contributing much to our happiness. These enjoyments pour in upon us at every opening, and from every quarter ; and they are manifestly the result of contrivance, proceeding from the all-creating Mind. For these benefits incessantly received, our hearts should send forth incessantly a return of gratitude to Him from whose bounty they flow.

God has made the intellectual powers with which he has endowed us, sources of enjoyment. Apart from the necessity or utility of knowledge, we have pleasure in possessing it, and pleasure in acquiring it. We commence our pleasurable lessons at the beginning of life ; and, throughout its course, the objects which surround us, stimulate and gratify our inquisitiveness. And the provision for intellectual enjoyment is not confined to the present life. Knowledge in the present life is but in part. Beyond death, new fields of discovery are opened to the immortal spirit ; new powers

will be given for exploring them ; and the exercise of these powers, in the boundless pursuit of knowledge, will be adapted to give new and eternally-accumulating happiness.

God has made us capable of pleasure from the exercise of virtue—a pleasure the richest and noblest that we can enjoy, and nearest akin to the blessedness of God. An opportunity for exercising virtue, and therefore for enjoying this pleasure, he has given at every moment of life, and in every relation that we bear. By the mental constitution with which he has endowed us, this pleasure will, if we continue to make progress in virtue, increase with every step of our advancement, until we reach the felicity of the upper world, and it will there continue to accumulate through our immortal existence.

God has made us capable of deriving enjoyment from society ; and he has given opportunity for this enjoyment by placing us in the midst of society from the commencement of life. Much of our knowledge is derived from society, and in society we find the chief occasions for the exercise of virtue. Hence our intellectual, moral, and social pleasures, become intimately blended. This union of pleasures continues through the life of a good man, and he dies with the assured hope of finding it again beyond the grave. There he will be introduced into the society of the pure and blest. There he will be for ever with the Lord, and will find in his presence fulness of joy.

The very exercise of gratitude gives pleasure ; and all these blessings so rich in the present gift, and so surpassingly rich in the future prospect, call forth its exercise in every mind which is not lost to virtue. How like the brute does that man live, who, amidst the profusion of enjoyments which God pours upon him,

cherishes no gratitude in his heart to the benevolent Author from whom they come ! Ingratitude is despised among men ; how offensive must it be in the sight of the holy God, to whom all sin is hateful !

## SECTION IV. TRUST.

It is our duty, not only to thank God for past and present blessings, but to trust him for future supply in every time of need. The experience of every hour reminds us of our absolute dependence on God. We are unable to sustain ourselves in being, or to control the operations of things around us, and compel them to yield us needed good. Our inability gives constant occasion for trust in God ; and trust in him is commanded in the word of God by express precept, and encouraged by numerous promises of divine blessing.

The attributes of God are a firm foundation for our trust. The needy apply for relief to persons of known benevolence, who have the power to grant the needed aid ; and the confidence of success is greater or less, according to the estimated benevolence and power of those to whom the application is made. God is infinite in benevolence and power, and is therefore infinitely worthy of all our confidence. The needy apply for relief to persons who have not invited them ; but God has invited us to come to him for the supply of every want, and to cast all our care on him. His past kindness is a sufficient assurance that his invitation and promise have not been given to deceive us, and we have the highest additional assurance in his truth. God cannot lie. His word of promise is more to be relied on than the laws of nature. These may be changed. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever ; and what he has said he will certainly perform. To charge a fellow-man with want



of truth, is esteemed one of the highest insults that we can offer him. If we distrust the veracity of God, he hears the very language of our hearts, and cannot be indifferent to its import; for "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar."<sup>1</sup>

To trust God with the cares of this life, requires a firm persuasion that all the affairs of life are under his management. It requires, moreover, a firm purpose to obey him in all things; since the benefits conferred by his overruling providence are made blessings to the obedient only. His threatenings deserve to be believed, as well as his promises; and if we sin against him, we have reason to expect his wrath, instead of his blessing. But if our trust in him is accompanied with a firm purpose to obey him, and a firm persuasion that all the events of life are under his control, we can enjoy undisturbed peace and tranquillity amidst the turmoil of life, and the whirl of human changes. With the same temper of mind, relying on the promises of his grace through Jesus Christ, we may contemplate death calmly, and rejoice in the hope of eternal life.

#### SECTION V. REPENTANCE.

WERE we free from sin, it would be our duty to render to God the love, obedience, gratitude, and trust, which have been described in the preceding sections. But the fact that we are sinners, gives occasion for a duty of which holy beings are incapable—the duty of repentance.

According to the moral judgment of mankind, he who has done wrong to his neighbor, is bound to regret the wrong, and make amends for it. This obligation is greatly increased, if the individual wronged is a

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 10.

friend and benefactor. The same principle of morals requires repentance for sins committed against God. We cannot, in our own persons, make amends for our sins against him; but we can accept with grateful joy the satisfaction for sin which his goodness has provided, in the death of Christ. All this we are bound to do. Repentance was not commanded in the decalogue—because the decalogue addresses men as men; but the gospel addresses men as sinners; and, therefore, in the gospel, God “commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”<sup>1</sup> And the Scriptures recognise the additional obligation derived from the goodness of God towards us. “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”<sup>2</sup>

He who, when charged by a fellow-man with having committed an offence against him, declares that he is not sorry for it, virtually repeats the offence. God accuses us of our sins daily, by the voice of conscience within us, by his judgments which are abroad in the earth, and by the word which he has given us from heaven. If, in the face of these accusations, we remain impenitent, he understands the silent utterance of the heart, as if it proclaimed abroad, in spite of his manifested displeasure, that we are not sorry for having offended him. What an aggravation of our guilt! How fearful is the condition of the impenitent! How just the denunciation, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”<sup>3</sup>

#### SECTION VI. RESIGNATION.

HE who sincerely repents of sin, condemns himself for having committed it, and acknowledges that he deserves punishment. He is, therefore, prepared to receive, without murmuring, those inflictions from the

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xiii. 3.

hand of God, which he regards as the punishment of his sins. In this spirit of submission, the penitent man endures the afflictions of life, and rejoices, if he may account them fatherly chastisements for his offences against infinite goodness, graciously intended and wisely adapted to promote his holiness.

Pious submission in present suffering, is always accompanied with resignation in the prospect of future calamities. The good man reviews God's past mercies with overflowing gratitude, and asks, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"<sup>1</sup> He trusts in God, not only when the sky is clear, and the sunshine of prosperity enlightens his path, but also when clouds and darkness obscure his way, and the gathering tempest howls over his head. He remembers that God rules in every storm; and God is his refuge and strength in every trouble. Without a tear, he is able to resign all into his heavenly Father's hand; and he sees no cause for fear, "though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."<sup>2</sup> Were the universe in convulsions, in God's hands he is safe.

#### SECTION VII. HABIT OF DEVOTION.

OUR thoughts, feelings, and actions are, to a very great extent, determined by previously-acquired habit. Through the power of habit, the thoughts, feelings, and actions of to-day, affect us to-morrow, and throughout our immortal existence. We are responsible for the habits which we form, and, because of their immense influence, our responsibility with respect to them is inconceivably great.

Our highest duties relate to God. Devotion consists

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<sup>1</sup> Job ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xli. 2.

in love, reverence, gratitude, repentance, trust, and resignation ; and the habit of devotion is the habit of exercising these affections. Since devotion is our highest duty, our responsibility to form a habit of devotion, is the highest of which we are capable.

Our opportunities for forming the habit of devotion, correspond to the greatness of our responsibility respecting it. They are more than we can number, greater than we can estimate. A contemplation of them will assist us to judge of the responsibility which they bring with them, and under which we are obliged to act at every moment of life.

1. Every object in creation is adapted to give exercise to devotion.

The heathen had gods presiding over almost every department of nature, as the hills, the vales, the mountains, forests, and the streams. We must not imitate them in this idolatry ; but we may learn from it a profitable lesson. In every object of nature, we may see the true God, the maker of all things ; and every object which we behold, should awaken thoughts of him, with feelings of devotion. The universe is a temple, filled with the presence and glory of the Deity ; and man is placed in this temple, and endowed with the faculties necessary to render religious homage to the Creator. Everything in this vast temple displays the Deity. The quivering leaf at our window tells us that God is near at hand ; and the star which twinkles in the blue heavens tells us that God exercises his power and wisdom in the remote regions of space. All his works praise him ; and the right contemplation of them must fill our hearts with devotion. If our eyes are not blind to the glory of God which all nature displays, and if our ears are not deaf to his praise with which all nature is vocal,

we shall join in the universal homage with habitual devotion.

2. All the changes in the universe are operations of God's hand, and give occasion for devotion.

God governs the world which he created, and controls all its movements. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without him. The pious man recognises his hand in every event, feels him in the earthquake, hears him in the thunder, sees him in the lightning, and perceives him equally in all the gentle movements of nature. The sun in his course, and the seasons as they revolve, tell him of God. The ceaseless changes which every passing moment brings under his observation, call on him to remember God, who directs them, working all after the counsel of his will.

3. We to whom God has given the Bible, enjoy the best means possible for cultivating the habit of devotion.

In ancient times God spoke to favored individuals to whom he made known his will. His revelation assumed an abiding form, when it was committed to writing ; and it has been completed by the addition of the New Testament. The entire volume is now in our hands ; and, in the perusal of it, we have the privilege of learning all that is necessary to our duty and happiness. In this word God speaks directly to us ; and makes himself clearly known. This book unfolds the counsels of infinite wisdom and grace, exhibits the character of God in the most attractive light, and presents the strongest incentives to devotion. With it as our constant companion, we can desire no better means for cultivating the habit of devotion.

For the proper use of all the advantages which God has given us, he holds us responsible ; but we do not use them aright, unless we make each an occasion for the *exercise* of devotion. If the opportunities, when pre-

sented, are treated with neglect, the habit of neglect will be formed. If we fail to see God in the objects of nature, and become engrossed in the exclusive contemplation of visible things, we shall become habitually undevout in the grand temple of the Creator. If we fail to recognise the divine hand in the changes of things, and limit our thoughts to the second causes which are concerned in these changes, we shall habitually live without God in the world. If we neglect the Holy Scriptures, or peruse them for any other purpose than that of spiritual improvement, we shall acquire the habit of treating with contempt our adorable Sovereign and benevolent Father, addressing us from the skies. We cannot be stationary. The habits which we are incessantly forming, if they do not bring us into nearer approach to God, are driving us from him, and preparing us for eternal banishment from his presence.

Our duty to God does not consist in the devotion of the heart only, but includes outward acts of obedience: and such is the connection between devotion and obedience, that neither can exist alone, and each promotes the other. If we would cultivate the feeling of compassion for the poor, we must exercise it in outward acts for their relief. The sentimental compassion which exhibits itself in tears without alms, is practical cruelty, and hardens the heart. In like manner, all religious feeling which is not accompanied with external obedience, is false piety, which mocks God, and ruins the soul.

#### SECTION VIII. PRAYER.

##### *Its Nature.*

PRAYER is the expression of desire or devotional feeling, in language addressed to God.

A prominent part of prayer is petition. This is the expression of desire. We desire to obtain some good, and we desire to obtain it from God. We express this desire in a form of words, in which we ask God to bestow the good desired. So needy are we, and so dependent on God, that in every approach to him we have occasion to ask some supply of our wants, some grace to help in time of need, and therefore petition may be considered a necessary part of prayer. So Paul appears to have regarded it: "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."<sup>1</sup>

In prayer, the various feelings of devotion find utterance in language. Love and reverence are expressed in blessing and adoring the great object of our worship. Gratitude is poured forth in words of thanksgiving, as we count over the favors received. Repentance is expressed in confessing our sins with all their aggravations, and imploring pardon through Jesus Christ. Trust and resignation appear in the surrender of ourselves into God's hand, to be delivered from evil, and supplied with daily bread.

Prayer must express the desires and devotional feelings *of the heart*. A form of words which proceeds not from the heart, is not prayer. Saul of Tarsus had been a devout Pharisee, and had often repeated forms of prayer; but when he became converted by the grace of God, all his former devotions were accounted nothing, and the Searcher of hearts now said concerning him, "Behold, he prayeth."<sup>2</sup> It is vain for men to draw nigh to God with the mouth, and honor him with the lips, while the heart is far from him. Such offering of mere words, however elegant in style, or impres-

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<sup>1</sup> Phill. iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 11.

sive in the mode of utterance, God does not account prayer.

Prayer must be expressed in language. Desires and devotional feelings do not constitute prayer while unexpressed in words. They may be a fulfilment of duty, so far as they go; but they do not fulfil the duty of prayer. For this, expression in words is necessary. It is not requisite that the words be pronounced in loud outcries, such as the worshippers of Baal used at Carmel. Prayer may be made, as in the case of Hannah, by the movement of the lips,<sup>1</sup> when no sound is heard; but the very movement of the lips is made with reference to words, in which the silent worshipper presents his supplications to him who hears in secret.

The language of prayer must be addressed to God. Prayer recognises the existence of God, and his ability to hear, and to grant the petitions which we offer. In the retirement of the closet, we realize that the Omnipresent God is with us, and we feel assured that he hears and understands the suppressed whispers in which we make our supplications. Prayer acknowledges all the perfections of God. The devotional feelings which it expresses, are dependent on a knowledge of these perfections. Prayer, therefore, is an act of religious worship, in which the suppliant pays divine honor to him before whom he bows in humble devotion.

While prayer is an act of religious worship, it is also the familiar and confiding intercourse of a child with an affectionate parent. The pious man addresses God as his father. The reverence and trust which he expresses in his prayer, are filial. Such is the condescending grace of the infinite God, that we are invited to come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. i. 13.



may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;' and, to encourage this filial boldness, we are assured that, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,"<sup>2</sup> and "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him."<sup>3</sup> In accordance with these assurances of God's condescension and love, we have been taught in the Holy Scriptures to pray to him as a father: "Our Father who art in heaven."

### *Its Obligation.*

DUTY to God requires the exercise of holy desires and devotional affections. Does it also require that these be expressed in the language of prayer? This cannot be necessary for God's information, since he knows the thoughts of the heart perfectly, though unexpressed in language. But our conduct towards God, is to be estimated by its tendency rather than its actual effect. Rebellion against him tends to dethrone him; and its guilt is to be estimated by this tendency, not by any actual effect which the rebellion of finite creatures can produce, towards subverting the government of the infinite God. In like manner, our obligation to pray is to be determined, not by any information given to God, or any benefit conferred on him, but by the tendency of the act, and the disposition which it evinces. We are bound to act, as if God needed to be informed respecting the desires and feelings of our hearts; and the Holy Scriptures so describe the duty of prayer: "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests *be made known* unto God."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 16.    <sup>2</sup> Ps. ciii. 13.    <sup>3</sup> Mat. vii. 11.    <sup>4</sup> Phil. iv. 6.

Our minds are so constituted, that they seek intercourse with other minds. The social tendency of our nature brings us into companionship with other intelligent beings, and impels us to hold intercourse with them. Our moral nature gives an additional impulse in the same direction. The obligation to love other beings requires intercourse with them. We cannot continue to love, without an effort to hold intercourse with the beings beloved, if intercourse is possible. Our chief medium of intercourse is language. By this we make known our thoughts to our fellow-men, and learn their thoughts in return. Love to God impels us to seek intercourse with him; and since language is our chief medium of intellectual intercourse, we obey the promptings of love, when we adopt it as the medium of communing with the Father of our spirits.

Intercourse with God is possible. Our imaginations sometimes personify fields and groves; and we address them with language, as if they were intelligent beings. But we need no such exercise of imagination, when we address God in the language of prayer. Faith realizes his presence. His ear is open to hear; and our intercourse with him by language, is as real as if we were addressing a venerated earthly friend, visible before our eyes, and listening to our words.

Prayer has always made a part in religious service. The heathens offer prayers to their gods. In the Bible, the worship of God in the earliest times is thus described: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Old Testament, prayer was a prominent part of the worship rendered to Jehovah; and his temple was called a "house of prayer."<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament we learn that the disciples of

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lvi. 7.

Christ "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication;"<sup>1</sup> and everywhere throughout its pages, prayer appears to have constituted an indispensable part of the service to God which the Christian religion enjoins.

In accommodation to our mode of holding intercourse with one another, God has made known his will to us by language. In the Bible he speaks to us in the language of men; and in prayer we use the language of men in speaking to God. We adopt the same medium of intercourse that he has chosen. We slight his condescension and kindness, if we neglect to use it for the purpose of holding intercourse with him.

God is pleased that our love and confidence should be expressed in words, as well as in acts of obedience. He is pleased when we perform acts which exhibit the right disposition of heart; and, for the same reason, he is pleased when this disposition is exhibited in acceptable words. Words of affection from a dutiful child, are pleasing to an earthly parent; and God condescendingly accepts from us such tokens of love as it accords with our nature to render; and he is justly offended if we withhold them.

In the Holy Scriptures, wicked men are described by their neglect of prayer; and, on the other hand, men of prayer are approved as righteous, and the favorites of heaven. In such incidental ways the duty and acceptableness of prayer are taught. Moreover, prayer is, in various passages of Scripture, expressly commanded: "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him,"<sup>2</sup> &c.; "Pray without ceasing."<sup>3</sup>

Prayer may be offered by several persons jointly. In this case, one of them utters the prayer in an audible voice, and the rest silently unite with their

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<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Hosea xiv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.

hearts in the service. The special promise made by Christ, when two agree<sup>1</sup> in their petitions, shows that union in prayer is specially acceptable to God.

The obligation of parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, requires that they be taught the duty of prayer. This should be done by example, as well as precept; and hence, family worship is an important duty. The neglect of this duty, by the heads of families, is criminal, and exposes them and their households to the displeasure of God: according to the denunciation of the prophet, "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name."<sup>2</sup>

Churches are societies organized for the worship of God. Prayer is an indispensable part of divine worship; and must, therefore, constitute a part of all acceptable church-service. It is clear, from the Holy Scriptures, that the first churches of Christ were accustomed to unite in public prayer; and the blessing of God on our religious assemblies cannot be expected, if this part of the public service is not performed with united heartfelt devotion.

### *Its Utility.*

By the benevolent arrangements of God, all the service which he requires, is made profitable to those who render it; and prayer, therefore, as a duty which he has commanded, must have its utility. An inquiry into this utility will further demonstrate our obligation to pray, and give strong encouragement to the performance of the duty.

The expression of our desires and devotional feelings in the language of prayer, tends greatly to strengthen

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. x. 25.

them. In seeking suitable words, and in giving them utterance, our thoughts must be engaged on the subjects of our address to God. We deliberately contemplate the good which we ask, the necessity which urges us to ask, our unworthiness of it, and the power and grace to which we appeal in presenting our petition. In offering thanksgiving, we deliberately count over the mercies which we have received, and our thoughts dwell on the value of the benefits, and on all the circumstances adapted to excite our gratitude for their bestowment. In expressing penitence, our thoughts necessarily dwell on our sins and their aggravations; and in imploring forgiveness, they are directed to the sacrifice of Christ, through which forgiveness is to be obtained; and we find a heart-moving power in contemplation of his sufferings. In offering adoration, we survey the divine perfections; and the view increases our love and reverence. These, and all other holy affections, our converse with God stimulates and strengthens. Prayer, therefore, tends greatly to promote holiness; and this benefit far excels in value all others which it is possible for us to receive.

Prayer gives constant exercise to self-examination. We express the desires and feelings of the heart to the Searcher of hearts, and we are therefore compelled to examine these desires and feelings with jealous and impartial scrutiny. God knows whether we come before him with sincerity, and we fear to dissemble in his presence. While we open our hearts before him, and tell him what is there, we are compelled to look ourselves at what we describe; and therefore prayer enlarges our self-knowledge. This is a highly-important benefit.

Family prayer is of inestimable value to those who have been trained under its influence. The sons and

daughters who are accustomed to bow with their parents at the family altar, receive impressions which nothing can obliterate. Parents may die; and the associates of early days may all be scattered. Years may be passed in the cares of life; and the habitation may be removed to a far distant land. But, over intervening years and intervening space, the thoughts return to the scenes of family devotion, when the father and mother, now in heaven, brought the objects of their parental love before the Lord, and implored his blessing on them for time and eternity. These scenes are hallowed in the memory; and children, trained in the midst of them, generally exhibit, in future life, the character which such training tends to produce. They imitate the piety of the parents whose memory they revere, and gratefully trace back their multiplied blessings received from God, to those prayers which commended them to God from early childhood.

The utility of prayer offered in the public assemblies of God's people, has been abundantly demonstrated. The devotion of those who unite in the prayer is increased, and the united petition brings down blessings from God. In answer to prayer, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost; and in answer to prayer, all the conquests of the gospel from that day have been achieved. Paul requested the prayers of the churches that his ministry might be attended with success;<sup>1</sup> and the spread and power of the gospel, in all ages and countries, has been greatly dependent on the fervent, effectual prayers of God's people.

An objection to the efficacy of prayer has been drawn from the unchangeableness of God. He is of one mind, and none can turn him; how then can our petitions

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 18, 19.

effect any change in his purpose? Will they procure any blessing which it was not previously his design to bestow, and which therefore would have been granted, though unasked?

This objection mistakes the nature of the connection between the purpose of God, and the order of sequences which it establishes. The purpose does not determine the future existence of any event, in disregard of its relation to appointed antecedents. It has its place, according to the purpose of God, in an established order of sequences; and the unchangeableness of the purpose does not more effectually determine that an event shall happen, than that it shall happen in its proper order of sequence. It does not determine that a crop shall be reaped, whether it be sown or not; that a man shall live, whether he eat, or obstinately refuse food; or that men shall be rewarded and punished for moral actions, whether the actions have been performed or not. God bestows many of his blessings in answer to prayer; and, since prayer is the appointed antecedent of their being bestowed, it is as necessary in order to their bestowment as any physical cause is necessary to the production of its proper effect. To expect these blessings without prayer, is as irrational as to expect a crop without sowing the seed.

God's unchangeableness establishes the necessity of prayer. In ancient times he bestowed blessings in answer to prayer; and very many examples are left on record, for our encouragement in the performance of the duty. He declared to his ancient people that it was his pleasure to be inquired of by the house of Israel for the blessings which they needed.<sup>1</sup> In later times he said: "Ye have not, because ye ask not."<sup>2</sup> If at

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<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

<sup>2</sup> James iv. 2.

the present time his blessings may be equally expected, whether asked or unasked, God has changed his plan. His unchangeableness, therefore, establishes the necessity of prayer.

The promises made to prayer assure us of its efficacy. "Ask, and ye shall receive."<sup>1</sup> "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."<sup>2</sup> We may be unable to see clearly the harmony of this promise with the unchangeableness of God's purpose, but we may be assured that God has no attribute which can prevent the fulfilment of his promise. In this matter, it is wise to take God at his word; and to act like dutiful children, who, in things beyond their comprehension, commit themselves to the guidance of their parents.

Our faith is liable, in some cases, to be perplexed with the apprehension that answer to prayer is impossible without a miracle. We pray earnestly that a sick friend may be restored to health; and yet the disease may be such that recovery is impossible, without an interposition of Providence which shall change the established course of nature. If we have no right to expect a miracle, how can we, in such cases, exercise firm faith in the efficacy of prayer?

Prayer is an expression of the desires and feelings of the heart; and, to be acceptable to God, the desires and feelings must be in accordance with his will. The wicked hate God, and an expression of their hatred cannot be pleasing to him. They say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."<sup>3</sup> Such expression of desire cannot constitute acceptable prayer. Feelings of pure devotion, and

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<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Job xxi. 14.



desires fully conformed to the will of God, should supply the matter of prayer. If we desire our sick friend to be restored, more than we desire the will of God to be done, we fail in the spirit of our petition. Christ did not so pray, when he said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."<sup>1</sup> Every petition which the Holy Spirit indites in the heart of a pious man, exhibits like submission, "because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."<sup>2</sup> The will of God is made known in many gracious promises of his word. These we are authorized to plead before him, with full assurance that our prayer will be heard. But faith requires a promise of God to rest on; and, if God has not promised to restore our sick friend, we cannot pray for his restoration in faith, otherwise than by complete submission to the divine will. God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; but he has not promised to suspend the laws of nature at our request. For spiritual blessings, the most important that we can crave, we are authorized to pray in the confidence of faith; but God requires our natural desires and affections to be brought into subjection to his will. Miracles have been wrought in answer to the prayer of faith; but unless God authorizes the expectation of a miracle, we cannot pray *in faith* that one may be wrought. Faith may stand up firmly on every promise of God; but where his will has not been made known, it is the proper office of faith to lie submissively at the great Sovereign's feet.

God's providence overrules the sequences of physical events, in wisely arranged harmony with his moral government. In the ordinary course of things, moral

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 39.<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 27.

actions are followed by consequences which indicate the approbation or disapprobation of the great Ruler. Sometimes, he manifests his approbation of virtue, or disapprobation of vice, by what are called special providences. These are not properly miracles, but extraordinary events resulting from natural causes; and so arranged, that they occur at precisely the proper time to proclaim, in the ears of men, that there is verily a God who judgeth in the earth. We become familiar with the ordinary providences of God, as with the ticking of the pendulum in the movements of a clock; and we forget that they proceed from wise contrivance and design; but special providences, occurring at the precise time to signify the will of heaven, like the striking of the clock at the precise time to indicate the hour of the day, arrest our attention, and deeply impress on our minds the conviction, that the Architect of the universe has determined the coincidence for our admonition. The maker of a clock may put his hand to the machine to repair it when necessary, or regulate its motion or wind it up; but an application of his hand is not required to make it strike the passing hour. So God may interpose by miracle in the movements of nature, when a miracle is necessary; but his providence, by its ordinary and extraordinary movements, in which no miracle occurs, is adapted by his wisdom to harmonize with his moral government, and teach men his will. God has answered prayer by miracle, when miraculous interposition was necessary; but in general, the efficacy of prayer has not required a departure from the established methods of his providence. In the ordinary course of things, the benefits of prayer are apparent, and pious men have often obtained answers to their petitions, by special providences so marked, that they have been constrained to accept them gratefully, as granted at their supplication.

## SECTION IX. OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH.

THE fourth commandment requires the separation of one day in seven for rest from ordinary toil. "Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it."<sup>1</sup>

The word "sabbath" signifies *rest*. The necessity of rest to animal nature, is provided for in part by the regular return of night; but even our days must not be wholly devoted to toil. Facts which have been learned by attentive observation, appear to justify the belief that laboring animals, which are allowed to rest one day in seven, live longer, and in the end perform more service, than those which are required to work every day without intermission. For this, or for some other reason known to God, he has chosen to require that irrational animals shall enjoy the rest of the Holy Day, as well as man.

But the appointment of the Sabbath was with a higher end in view than the mere relief of animal nature. It is to be kept "holy," and is called "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." The work prohibited is called "thy work;" and hence, work may be performed on this day for God. It is his day, and should be employed in his worship and service.

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. xx. 8-12.

The Sabbath-day is especially appropriate for the public worship of God. It was commanded by Moses to be "an holy convocation;"<sup>1</sup> and Christ sanctioned the use of the Sabbath for public worship, by meeting on that day with the Jews in the synagogue, and taking a part in the services. If we neglect public worship on the Sabbath, we shall fail to attain a most important end of the institution.

The Sabbath should be used for the reading and study of God's word, for imparting and receiving religious instruction, for meditation and prayer, for family religion, and for works of mercy. The Jews superstitiously objected to Christ's healing on the Sabbath; but he taught, that mercy to animals in leading them to water, and mercy to men, in relieving their afflictions, were suitable services for the holy day.<sup>2</sup>

Works of necessity are admissible on the Sabbath. We may relieve our own animal wants, as we relieve those of others. We may meet necessities which the providence of God imposes on us, and regard the act as performed in his service; but when we obey necessities of our own creating, we are doing our own work, and therefore violating the Lord's Sabbath.

Mental labor for mere pleasure or secular benefit, is prohibited. We are forbidden to find our own pleasure, as well as to do our own works.<sup>3</sup> The reading of books for amusement is inconsistent with the sanctity of the day; and all other employments which have pleasure only in view.

The obligation to observe the Sabbath extends to servants; and masters are criminal who require service of them in violation of the commandment. They should be taught their duty in respect of the holy day, and aided and encouraged in the performance of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxiii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xiii. 15, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lviii. 13.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DUTIES OF RECIPROCITY.

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#### SECTION I. RIGHTS.

THUS far we have used the word *right* as an adjective, to denote a quality of moral action. But there is also a substantive use of it, derived from the former. It is right for a father to chastise his disobedient son; and we may express this truth thus: a father has a right to chastise his disobedient son. It is right for a man to receive obedience from his children; or to possess the estate which he has inherited from his ancestors; or to claim the house which he has bought with his money. In all these cases, we may vary the phraseology, and say, a man has a right to receive, to possess, to claim, &c.; or we may omit these infinitive verbs, and say more briefly, a man has a right to obedience from his children; to the estate inherited from his ancestors; and to the house which he has bought with his money.

Though it is often a matter of indifference whether we say, *It is right for him*, or *He has a right*, yet these phrases have not perfect identity of meaning. We express a man's obligation when we say, "It is right for him to pay his debts;" but the sentence, "He has a right to pay his debts," does not convey this sense, and cannot be appropriately used, unless we conceive the payment of debts a privilege of which a man may

be deprived. In both cases *right* is opposed to *wrong*: in the first, to wrong done by the individual himself; in the second, to wrong done by others, who deprive him of what they ought to permit him to enjoy. The latter mode of speaking, therefore, marks the moral obligation, not of the individual himself, but of others with respect to him. Hence, a man's rights are *the enjoyments, or means of enjoyment, which all persons are under moral obligation to allow him to use at his pleasure.*

Rights are exclusive. According to the definition just given, a man cannot have a right to anything, if another may rightfully deprive him of its enjoyment; and, therefore, his right must exclude any right of the other to the same thing.

When *right* is used as an adjective, it signifies conformity to the moral obligations of the agent; but when used as a noun, right and obligation have not the same boundary, if both refer to the same individual. Though I have a right to travel on foot, I am not under obligation, but may prefer to ride. To make the boundaries identical, the right must be referred to one person, and the obligation to all other persons. Thus, I have a right to travel on foot, and all other persons are under obligation not to hinder me from the exercise of this right. There may be common rights: for example, one man has as much right as another to warm in the sunbeams, or bathe in the ocean. But the right of each one excludes the right of all others to interfere.

The rule of right, in any application of the term, is the will of God. We are so formed as to need air for breathing, and light for seeing; and since God has supplied us with air and light, we know it to be his will that we should use them. We have therefore a right to them. On the same principle, we have a right to

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the productions of the ground for food ; and if natural religion cannot establish our right to the flesh of animals for food, revelation establishes it beyond question. God has given us all things richly to enjoy ; and every individual has a right to enjoy them, under such limitations as the will of God may determine.

Man is formed for society, and it is manifestly the will of God that he should live in society. Hence arises a necessity, in many cases, for dividing the means of enjoyment. Light and air are so abundant, that no conflict of claim for them can exist ; but food, clothing, and many other good things, are more or less dependent on the labor of man, and need to be distributed by rule. This rule is the will of God. He has not distributed the means of enjoyment equally to all. Some are rich, and others poor. Some have their abode in wealthy places, where blessings abound ; others are born and die where want and wretchedness prevail. Some have strength of intellectual and corporeal faculties ; others are weak in mind and body. Some have habitual health ; others are diseased from the cradle to the grave. God has distributed to every one as he has pleased ; and has not left it entirely to the will or judgment of men, to divide among themselves the gifts of his providence. Yet the distribution is in part dependent on human agency, and one man may wrongfully appropriate to himself what another ought to enjoy. In this conflict of human claims, we need a rule for determining the rights of each individual.

Have all men equal rights ? The doctrine has been maintained that, however diversified the conditions of men, the rights of all are equal. In what sense is this doctrine true ?

A man with but one eye, has as much right to it, as a more favored man has to both of his ; and to put out

his one eye, would be as great an injury, as to put out the two eyes of the other. Their rights are equal in one respect, and unequal in another. The distinction needs to be expressed in suitable language ; and I know none more suitable, than to say, that their rights are equal in sacredness, but unequal in extent. The right to the one eye is as perfect and exclusive, as the right to the two eyes ; and should be as sacredly guarded from all infringement ; and yet it is true, that one man has a right to two eyes, and the other a right to but one. Any attempt to equalize the extent of their rights, by giving to the one-eyed man some control over one of the other man's eyes, would be a foolish and unavailing opposition to the manifested will of Divine Providence.

The use of our eyes is a natural right ; and the example just adduced demonstrates, that even natural rights admit diversity of extent. Were there but one man on earth, he would have a right to use his eyes in the procuring of food ; and also a right to use for food any of the earth's productions, which are adapted to gratify his appetite and nourish his body. His right to the use of these, would be in as manifest accordance with the will of God, as the use of the eyes which God has given him. But God has placed a multitude of human beings on the earth, all of whom need support ; and it is manifestly his will that the productions of the ground should be divided among them. Some rule of division becomes necessary ; and this rule, whatever it may be, distinguishes the social rights of man from his solitudinal rights.

If one man has a natural right to pluck and eat the fruit of a tree which the Lord God has planted, another has the same right ; but, in establishing a rule of division, there would be an obvious fitness in giving to each



man the use of the fruit which he had plucked, and withholding from him the use of that which had been plucked by the other. If each has a natural right to the animals of the forest for food, each has a social right to those animals only which he himself has caught, and is bound to refrain from using those taken by the other. The labor of the parties is the ground on which this division of rights is established. On the same principle, as society improves, one man acquires a right to the fruit of a tree which he has planted and cultivated, to the animals which he has tamed, to the house which he has built, and to the ground which he has subdued and enclosed. Other rules of division are afterwards introduced ; and all these reject the supposition, that the social rights of all men are equal in extent.

But social rights, however different in extent, are equal in sacredness. The poor man who possesses but one ewe lamb, has as much right to it, as his rich neighbor who abounds in flocks and herds ; and to take from him his one lamb, is a crime as great, and as offensive to God, as to take away the entire possessions of the other. It is the will of God, that we should have the poor always with us, that whensoever we will we may do them good. If all distinction of property were abolished, opportunity for kindness to the poor, a virtue highly commended in the word of God, would be lost ; the eighth commandment, *Thou shalt not steal*, would be rendered useless ; and the wise regulation of natural and revealed religion, *He that will not work shall not eat*, would be discarded. According to the manifest will of God, the rights of property are unequal in extent ; but God teaches the equal sacredness of the poor man's rights, and denounces judgments on those who defraud the poor, or withhold the wages of the hireling.

Besides the distinction of rich and poor, there are

other distinctions in human society, attended with diversity in the extent of rights. When our first parents were banished from Eden, they went forth into the wide world, the only two human beings on earth, with rights of unequal extent. To one appertained the rights of the husband; to the other, the rights of the wife. When sons were born to them, a new distinction of rights arose; the parents had theirs, and the children others differing in extent. All this diversity was according to the will of God, who commanded the wife to be in subjection to her husband, and gave to the parents authority over their children. Any theory which makes the rights of husband, wife, parent, and child, all equal in extent, opposes the will of God, and the order and happiness of domestic society.

The first form of civil government appears to have been patriarchal. The diversity of rank and authority in the family, was extended to the wider society of the tribe or nation. God, who established the distinctions in the family, has sanctioned those in the nation. "The powers that be are ordained of God."<sup>1</sup> Children are required to obey their parents in the Lord,<sup>2</sup> and *because it is well pleasing unto the Lord*,<sup>3</sup> and the same considerations are urged on subjects to induce obedience to their rulers. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man *for the Lord's sake*: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."<sup>4</sup> Parents may exercise authority over their children unwisely and cruelly; and rulers may tyrannize over their subjects. They who suffer under such government, whether from parents or civil rulers, are bound to submit to the evil,

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1.   <sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 1.   <sup>3</sup> Col. iii. 20.   <sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 13.

as brought on them by Providence for their trial, just as they submit to poverty, disease, and other evils incident to human life.

The relations of the family, and of civil government, are so extensive as to affect mankind generally. All men from the days of Adam and Eve, have sustained the relation of child; and a large part of them, that of parent. The world is divided into nations, and men are among the governing or the governed. But there are other relations of less extent, as that of the master and the servant, which have the sanction of God. He commands servants to obey their masters in singleness of heart, *as unto Christ*;<sup>1</sup> and he commands masters how to exercise their authority.

God's providence determines the very great diversity of condition in human society; and the inequality in the extent of their rights, which necessarily results from this diversity of condition, is according to his will, and designed for the general good; but amidst all this diversity, the rights of all men are equally sacred. The cruelty of a father may violate the rights of his son, the tyranny of a king may violate the rights of his subject, and the oppression of a master may violate the rights of his servant. In all these cases, God holds to account those whom he has invested with authority, and will be the avenger of the weak and dependent. It has appeared good to the wisdom that arranged the moral government of the world, that, in this state of probation, some men shall be under the authority and in the power of others; but a fearful reckoning awaits those who abuse that authority and power to the injury of their fellow-men. God does not require that all distinctions of rank and authority

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 5.

should be abolished ; but he requires that the rights of all should be held sacred.

Acts of reciprocity do not change the extent of rights, or disturb the inequality between them. If a rich man buys a horse from a poor man, and gives him a fair equivalent for it, the rights of the parties are just as extensive and just as unequal as they were before the transaction. If a fair equivalent is not given, the rights of the poor man are rendered less extensive, and are so far violated. The law of reciprocity forbids this encroachment on his rights, but does not require that the extent of his rights should be increased.

The Holy Scriptures bind us to respect the sacredness of other men's rights, by the well-known precepts: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."<sup>1</sup> "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."<sup>2</sup> These precepts do not bind to an equal division of rights, whether natural or acquired ; but they require us to avoid encroachment on the rights of another, with as much care as if our own rights were concerned. We must put ourselves in his stead ; and in all our dealings with him, respect his rights, guarding them as sacredly as our own. If the precepts inculcate any duty beyond this, it belongs to the department of benevolence, not of reciprocity.

### *Classification of Rights.*

Rights are *alienable*, when they can be transferred to another ; *inalienable*, when they cannot. The right to a house, or a horse, may be transferred by sale or gift ; but the right of private judgment, in matters of religion, cannot be transferred : hence, the former right

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. xix. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 12.

is called *alienable*; the latter, *inalienable*. Those rights are inalienable, the relinquishment of which would involve a violation of duty.

Rights are *perfect*, when they may be enforced; *imperfect*, when they may not. Rights founded on reciprocity, and well defined by contract or otherwise, become cognisable by human law, and are called *perfect*. But the right of a beggar to alms cannot be enforced, because it is founded on benevolence, not on reciprocity; and the right of a benefactor to gratitude cannot be enforced, because the obligation cannot be measured by human law. The latter rights are therefore imperfect.

*Natural* rights, as opposed to *social*, are those which appertain to man in a state of solitude; as opposed to *adventitious*, they are those which do not depend on accidental circumstances; as opposed to *acquired*, they are those which are not obtained by labor, purchase, inheritance, or gift; as opposed to *legal*, they are those which perfect justice would accord to each individual, and which the laws fail, through human imperfection, to define with exactness. When it is said that men, in the establishment of civil government, relinquish some of their natural rights to obtain protection for the rest, the phrase *natural rights* appears to import the rights that would belong to men in a perfectly virtuous society, which would need no government. Man is by nature formed for society; and it is, therefore, inaccurate to consider those rights only *natural*, which appertain to a state of solitude; but it is a matter of minor importance how the term is applied, if it be well defined, and be used in a uniform sense throughout each process of reasoning in which it may be employed.

## SECTION II. JUSTICE.

JUSTICE is the disposition to give to every one his proper share of the enjoyments which God has provided for men, or it is the conduct which corresponds to this disposition.

Justice is divided into distributive and commutative.

Distributive justice belongs to government, and is concerned in dividing out to the several members of society their proper extent of rights, and also in subsequently varying that extent by rewards or punishments.

Commutative justice is fair dealing in the exchange of commodities. When two parties transfer rights to each other, the exchange is just, if the rights transferred are equal. Hence, commutative justice makes no change in the extent of rights.

The duties of reciprocity refer to commutative justice, and are violated by the wrong-doing which lessens the extent of any one's rights, or impairs his enjoyment of them.

## SECTION III. RIGHT OF PROPERTY.

*Proof.*

ALL right of property is founded on the will of the Creator. We, and all that we can claim, belong to God; and we have, therefore, no right to anything in exclusion of his right: but it is his will that, of the various good things which he bestows, while some are the common property of all, others are distributed among them so that each may claim and use his own, to the exclusion of all other persons. That this is the will of God, may be proved by natural religion and by revelation.

Natural religion proves that God designed men to

have property. The distinction of *mine* and *thine* is expressed in every language; and the most uncultivated nations have use for terms to express it, because the idea is common to all men. At a very early age, children begin to claim things as their own, and show a sense of being wronged, if deprived of them. The advantages resulting to society from the division of property among individuals, are obvious. Were all things common to the industrious and the idle, the careful and the improvident, labor would cease for want of reward; nothing would be accumulated for future use, and want and suffering would become universal. In countries where the right of property is but partially respected, the evils which have been enumerated have prevailed. When the right of property is rendered insecure by civil war, or by despotic power, industry languishes, and the arts of life are neglected. On the other hand, those nations enjoy the highest prosperity and happiness where the laws give security to the owners of property. These facts suffice to demonstrate that the right of property has the sanction of God, and ought to be respected by men.

Revelation gives further assurance that the right of property accords with the will of God. The commandment "Thou shalt not steal," would be unmeaning, if all men had equal right to everything. By giving this commandment, God has taken the right of property under his guardianship. The duty of giving to the poor is everywhere enforced in the Holy Scriptures, with frequent and abundant promises of divine reward; but this duty would be impossible, if the division of property, and the distinction between rich and poor, did not exist. Extortion, a crime which the Bible reprobates, would also be impossible, if everything which the

oppressor's hand could grasp, were his own by unquestionable right.

*How acquired.*

Our right to everything that we enjoy, is derived from the gift of God. He benevolently provides for our wants; and, beyond our wants, opens to us sources of pleasure. What he gives, we have a right to enjoy, under such restrictions as his will ordains. Other creatures, equally the objects of his care, have a right to share his bounty with us; and, in distributing the good which he has provided, social regulations, determining the right of property, become necessary.

Men in society acquire a right to what is the fruit of their labor. The house which an individual has built, is, of right, his own; and he has a right to inhabit it, to the exclusion of his neighbor. In like manner, he has a right to the wild animals or fish which he has caught for food; to the produce of the ground which he has cultivated; and to the fruit of the tree which he has planted. In the origin of society, the occupancy of lands, for the purpose of cultivating them, gives a right to them—which ceases when they cease to be occupied; but in a more advanced state of society, regulations are established, giving permanent right to lands. Such regulations are needed to induce a careful cultivation of the earth, and to multiply its productions to an extent equal to the wants of its inhabitants. Divine sanction was given to it, in the settlement of the Hebrew tribes in the land of Canaan.

A right to property may be acquired by *exchange*, or by *gift*. He who has produced a quantity of corn by cultivating the ground, may exchange a part of it for animals which a hunter has taken in the chase; or he may give a part to a poor neighbor, to gratify his own



benevolent desire. The rights so acquired, whether by exchange or by gift, are as much in accordance with God's will, and deserve to be held as sacred, as those which are acquired by labor, or the direct gift of Providence.

The right of property may be acquired by *will*, or by *inheritance*. A right to use property as one chooses, implies, not only a right to give it during life, but also to bequeath it at death to whomsoever he pleases. When an individual dies, without disposing of his property by *will*, the regulations of society transfer it by *inheritance* to his children, or other near relatives.

A species of right to property is acquired by *possession*. The right is not absolute ; but merely exclusive of all who have not a better right. If the fact that one man has obtained possession of a house by fraud, gave right to another to drive him out by force, a third might, with equal justice, dispossess the second ; and similar changes might proceed without end. To guard against such mutations, society wisely admits the imperfect right of possession ; and in some cases, after a lapse of time, makes it permanent and complete.

#### *How violated.*

The right of property is violated when the property is taken without the consent of the owner duly obtained. Of this violation there are several species.

The right of property is violated when property is taken without the knowledge of the owner. This is *theft*. The thief may come in the darkness of night, or may enter the house in the absence of the family, or may take goods from the merchant's counter, while he is busy with other customers. In all such cases every man's moral judgment condemns the deed. It is no justification that the amount taken is small, that the

owner will not miss it, that he has an abundance left, that the thief needs it more than the owner, or that the thief has never consented to the unequal distribution of property which prevails in society. With such pleas dishonest men may strive to appease their consciences and harden themselves in crime; but God's command, "Thou shalt not steal," is sufficient to set aside all such pleas. Some persons manifest less tenderness of conscience in taking what belongs to the public, on the ground that they are a part of the public. But other persons also are a part of the public, and the consent of all is necessary to justify the deed. He who cheats the revenue, or the post-office, or the turnpike, is as guilty as he who steals from an individual.

In general theft is not to be determined by the value of what is taken. To steal a dime is as truly a dishonest act as to steal a dollar. But there may be cases in which the smallness of the amount will, in peculiar circumstances, justify the presumption of the owner's consent, though not formally obtained. If, in an emergency, I desire to borrow a post-office stamp from an intimate friend, and find him out of his office, my conscience would not charge me with dishonesty for presuming on his consent that I may take a stamp from his desk: but I could not honestly take a thousand dollars from his drawer on a like presumption. On the same principle I may take an apple from my friend's orchard, when I cannot take away his crop of apples without his formal consent. The truly conscientious man will never act on presumed consent, if there can be a possible doubt whether the owner would grant it if present.

The right of property is violated when property is taken by force. This is *robbery*. He commits robbery who forcibly takes from a traveller his coat or his purse.

The case is substantially the same if he obtains a delivery of the purse by putting the traveller in fear. Consent violently obtained, is not consent, and the crime of robbery is aggravated by the threat of violence.

The right of property is violated, when the owner's consent to part with it is unduly obtained. This is *fraud* or *cheating*. Cases of this kind are of frequent occurrence. A counterfeit note is passed as if it were genuine; a diseased horse is sold or exchanged as if he were sound; damaged goods are sold as if undamaged. In such cases consent is obtained dishonestly. The modes are innumerable, in which consent to part with money or other property, may be obtained unjustifiably. The beggar may obtain it by a false tale of wants or sufferings; the seller of corn may obtain it, by inducing a false belief of approaching scarcity; the druggist may obtain it, by exciting the fears or faith of one to whom he offers his nostrum. Commercial honesty is so frequently and so readily violated, that a careful study of its requirements is necessary to every one who participates in the ordinary transactions of trade.

The use of false weights and measures is another mode in which the right of property may be violated. This iniquity is frequently reprobated in the Holy Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

#### SECTION IV. SELLER AND BUYER.

It is often inconvenient for those who need an article of merchandise, to obtain it directly from the manufacturer or producer. A class of persons, intermediate between the producer and the consumer, render important benefits to society, by keeping for sale such articles

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xi. 1, xx. 10; Amos viii. 5.

as are generally needed in the community. These persons employ capital and skill in their business, and are entitled to fair remuneration for the service which they render to the public, if rendered in conformity to the laws of commercial justice.

He who offers to sell, ought to be content with the market price. If the article has risen in value, while it has been in his possession, he is entitled to the benefit of the rise ; and if it has fallen, he has no right to keep up the price that he may make his usual profit. A part of his skill in business, consists in judging of the probable changes which will take place in the value of commodities ; and, as he has the benefit of his skill when they rise in value, he ought to suffer the loss which accrues from the failure of his skill in the other case.

He who opens a store for the sale of articles is bound to sell them, if the market price be offered. If he keeps back his article with the expectation of a higher price, he deceives the public, and does not fulfil the expectations which he has created. He invites customers who desire the articles he deals in, and virtually promises to supply them to the best of his ability. This promise he violates, if he refuses to sell. He is not bound, however, to sell articles which do not belong to his professed business. The china merchant is bound to sell his china ; but not the store-house in which he keeps it.

He who sells, is bound to sell a good article, and if he knows it to be damaged, he is bound to inform the buyer. A part of the skill for which he is remunerated, consists in selecting good articles ; and, if he fails in his selection, he ought not to permit the buyer to pay for the failure. Sales at auction form an exception to this rule, because the auctioneer does not profess to ex-

ercise skill in judging and selecting the articles which he sells.

He who sells, is under no obligation to judge whether the buyer needs the article which he offers. If he gives good advice on this point, it is an act of benevolence to which he is not bound by mere justice. If he purposely misleads the buyer, that he may get sale for his article, he is guilty of fraud.

Some one may plead, that, since these rules are not generally observed, he would be unable to compete in business with others, if he observed them strictly. This plea cannot be admitted. No man has a right to be dishonest for any consideration. If necessity would justify want of strict integrity, it might be made a plea for any other immorality. But, even on the score of gain, the plea is untenable. Artifice may gain temporary advantage; but, in the end, honesty is the best policy.

The buyer is under similar obligations. He should be willing to give the market value of the article which he buys; and, if this price yields a profit to the seller, he ought to desire no abatement on this account, for the profit is the just remuneration for the capital and skill which the seller has employed. To wish this remuneration relinquished, is virtually to wish the seller to serve for nothing.

The buyer has no right to use any artifice, to induce the seller to part with his property below its true value. The circulation of reports by which the value of certain articles in market becomes lessened, is a dishonest stratagem to which buyers sometimes resort. The excitement of groundless fears in the seller's mind, to make him lessen the price of his property, is unjustifiable. In general, all efforts to deceive the seller as to the true value of his property, are dishonest. Such

dishonesty was practised in the days of Solomon. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."<sup>1</sup>

A bargain is completed, when the consent of both parties has been expressed. Custom, or the necessity of the case, or the stipulations of the contract, may allow time for the delivery of the property; but, in general, all the risk of its durability, or of its depreciation in value, is, from the time of the contract, transferred to the new proprietor.

#### SECTION V. TEMPORARY TRANSFER OF RIGHT.

In some cases, the right of property is transferred for a time, with the understanding that, at the end of the time, it shall revert to the former proprietor. Thus, a horse may be hired for a day, or a house rented for a year. In such cases, due care is to be taken of the property by him who receives it in possession; no other use is to be made of it than that which the contract provided for; it is to be returned at the end of the stipulated time; and the stipulated remuneration for its use is to be paid.

The proper remuneration for the temporary use of property, depends on its value, and the risk to which it is exposed. Its value is so much capital invested; and, since capital is profitable to the owner, no one has a right to use the capital of another, without equitable remuneration. The laws have undertaken to fix the proper estimate for the temporary use of capital, by establishing a rate of interest for money loaned. But the risk which attends the temporary use of property, is too various to be determined by law. The mere risk is sometimes taken by insurance companies, who derive

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xx. 14.

no benefit from the capital invested. Insurance from fire, from loss at sea, &c., must be estimated according to the nature of the case. He who rents a house, should pay for the use of so much capital as is invested in its value, for the diminution in value which it will suffer from his use of it, and for the risk of fire while he occupies it. Since the contract determines the amount of rent to be paid, it must also determine the use to be made of the property, and the risk to which it is to be exposed. He who rents a house as a dwelling-place for a family, and afterwards uses it as a stable for horses, or as a place for experiments with gunpowder, violates his contract, and is guilty of dishonesty.

He who lets out property for temporary use, is bound, like him who sells, to furnish a good article; or, if it be defective, to make known the defects before the contract is completed. He who hires out a horse for a service to which he is unfitted by disease or untractableness, and he who lets out a house with leaky roof or smoky chimneys, without making the defects known, are guilty of fraud.

### *Usury.*

The term *usury* is employed in the Holy Scriptures to denote the compensation allowed for the use of money; but this is now generally expressed by the term *interest*, and the name *usury* is applied exclusively to a rate of interest exceeding that which is established by law. Hence, usury is a crime against the law.

The propriety of establishing a rate of interest by law is questionable. The value of capital is fluctuating; and when it rises high, conscientious men will not lend its use in the form of money, but prefer to invest it in houses which may be let out at a high rent without violating the law, or to dispose of it in some other manner in which it will bring them a large

return. The consequence is, that the lending of money becomes confined to those who are willing to violate the law; and, from the absence of competition, they are enabled to obtain a far higher rate of interest than could be obtained, if there were no law prohibiting usury. The effect of the prohibition, therefore, is, to give a premium to those who are willing to violate the law, and to put it in their power to oppress all who are compelled to borrow.

The considerations which have been presented, are not sufficient to justify a citizen in violating the law prohibiting usury. The law is not against the law of God, and therefore ought to be obeyed, until it has been repealed. But the subject demands the attention of legislators, who would probably advance the general good, by allowing the interest on money loaned, like the rent of a house, to be determined by contract. The law might still fix a rate of interest to be allowed, in the absence of a contract, just as it disposes of the property of those who die without a will.

#### SECTION VI. SERVICE AND AGENCY.

IN barter or sale, one material commodity is exchanged for another; but cases occur, in which money or other property is given in exchange for service; as when a laborer is hired to perform a day's work, or a physician is employed to attend a case of sickness.

The master or employer of a hired servant is bound to give a fair compensation for the service rendered, and to pay the wages punctually. The Scriptures proclaim the displeasure of God against those who oppress the hireling, and withhold his wages. The servant is bound on his part to render, to the best of his ability, the kind and amount of service which he has stipulated to perform; and to be content with his wages.



When an individual is employed to serve another, by transacting business for him with a third party, the employee is denominated *agent*, and the employer *principal*. The acts of the agent bind the principal, so far as he confines himself to the proper business of his agency; but no further. If a clerk in a store receives money for his employer, and appropriates it to his own use, the employer must suffer the loss; but if a customer should pay money to the merchant's coachman, the customer is bound to run the risk of loss, because the coachman is not an authorized agent for the receiving of money.

If an individual fraudulently claims to be the agent of one who has not appointed him, the third party who accredits him, must suffer any loss which may accrue from his too credulous confidence. The fact that an agent has been appointed, is sometimes made known by public announcement, and sometimes by written credentials given to the agent. It has also been held, that if the principal has in any one case acknowledged himself bound by the acts of the agent, he continues to be bound in all similar cases, till he has given notice to the contrary.

The agent is bound to serve his principal to the best of his ability, according to the nature and design of the service for which he is employed. He is bound, in simple agency, to obey precisely the instructions of the principal. But there are cases in which this obligation becomes modified. In professional agency, as when physicians or lawyers are employed in the proper business of their profession, they are not equally bound to obey instructions. They are employed because of their superior skill; and this skill should be exerted for the benefit of the employer, according to their own judgment. A physician has no right to give, at the desire

of his patient, drugs that will poison him. A lawyer has no right, because his client desires it, to manage a suit in a manner which will render it unsuccessful. Professional men are bound to regard, not only the interests of the employer, but also their own reputation; and, if they cannot faithfully exercise their professional skill, they ought to relinquish the case.

Legislators are professional agents, employed to make laws, because of their supposed qualifications for this service. They are, therefore, not under obligation to make bad laws at the desire of their constituents. Whether they are bound to resign, rather than disobey the instructions of their constituents, is a question on which different opinions have been maintained. Where the Constitution of the country prescribes an election for a term of years, and makes no provision by which the electors may recall the agent whom they have chosen and duly appointed, it is by no means clear that he is bound to retire from office at their request.

#### SECTION VII. INJURY TO CHARACTER.

A MAN'S character is the assemblage of his qualities, intellectual, social, and moral; and these constitute his essential wealth. Rank and condition of life, and all external possessions, are merely accidental, and, though present to-day, may be absent to-morrow. Such are the changes observed in the history of human life, that the lot of each individual has been imagined to be determined by a blind and fickle goddess, called Fortune; and the instability of her gifts has been represented by the revolution of a wheel, which elevates at one moment to the height of prosperity, and depresses at the next to the depths of adversity. Revelation pronounces all external riches uncertain,<sup>1</sup> and describes them as making

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 17.

themselves wings, and flying away;<sup>1</sup> and bids us seek durable riches.<sup>2</sup> When, in the fluctuations of human affairs, a man's fortunes become shipwrecked, and all external good is hopelessly lost, if he possesses within himself those qualities which constitute true worth, he is rich in his poverty. Nor is this all. Death strips man of all external good. Power, rank, riches, whatever of these fortune may have given, if it chances to continue through life, is certainly lost at death. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out."<sup>3</sup> But he who has the internal wealth of a pure character, and is rich toward God, will bear his wealth with him when he leaves the world behind him, and all that is so attractive and so highly prized in this life of empty show and delusive hopes.

Wealth of character is not kept in strong boxes, where thieves may break through and steal. No one can take it from us without our consent; but it is not, therefore, out of danger. Our first parents were beguiled into sin, and lost the purity and innocence which constituted their essential worth, rather than their possession of Eden, and their dominion over all the creatures of earth. In the history of fallen man it has been found everywhere true, that evil communications corrupt good manners. Men have been tempters of their fellow-men, and are but too successful auxiliaries in this service to the grand tempter of the human race. The thief who takes away property by stealth, and the robber who takes it by violence, can do but little harm. Even the slanderer, who robs men of reputation, cannot deprive them of virtue and a pure conscience. But he who robs me of these, makes me poor indeed. My

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxiii. 5.    <sup>2</sup> Prov. viii. 18; Matt. vi. 19.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 7.

self-approbation, my conscious worth, my peace of mind, my assurance of God's approbation, are all gone; and what have I left but poverty most abject, and wretchedness most complete?

The criminality of seducing men from virtue is darkly and impressively exhibited in the Holy Scriptures. Jeroboam is presented as odious and execrable, because he "made Israel to sin."<sup>1</sup> The Pharisees are condemned because they compass sea and land to make one proselyte, who, when made, was two-fold more the child of hell than themselves.<sup>2</sup> The terrible woe pronounced on Babylon was for corrupting the nations.<sup>3</sup> God has placed men in such relations to one another, that the tendencies of virtue and vice are displayed in their effects on society. As he who converts a sinner from the error of his ways saves a soul from death, so he who seduces a fellow-creature from virtue, entangles him in the snare of the devil, and delivers him over to destruction; and as the former has the approbation of God and all good beings, the latter deserves universal execration, and will receive the curse of the Almighty.

The thief who steals at midnight, is rewarded for his nocturnal vigilance and cautious intrusion by the gain which he acquires; and the robber who stops the traveller on the highway, is rewarded for his adventurous boldness by the purse of gold which he bears off; but he who robs another of innocence, has, in general, no such reward. The love of doing mischief prompted Satan to enter the garden of Paradise; and tempters in human form are often instigated by the same love of destroying. Fiends in human form, they find a hellish joy in the ruin of virtue and happiness. Other seducers of innocence plunge their victims into crime

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xvi. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xix. 2, 3.

and misery for the sake of some momentary gratification, or of some trifling gain. They cannot, like the thief and robber, transfer to themselves the wealth of which they deprive those whom they reduce to poverty and wretchedness. They cannot become innocent, by robbing others of their innocence. But they bring accumulated guilt and damnation on themselves; while, for some trifling enjoyment at most, they bring guilt and damnation on others. What curse of omnipotent wrath can be too dreadful for crime so atrocious? Yet such crime stalks abroad in human society, and meets us with bold front at the corner of every street.

The art of the destroyer no one should desire either to teach or to learn, except to detect and counteract his mischievous designs. In pure virtue, conscience, governed itself by the will of God, governs all the impulses of the mind.

The methods of seducing from virtue, consist in—1. Weakening the restraints of conscience; 2. Increasing the strength of unlawful desire; and 3. Facilitating actual transgression.

### 1. *Weakening the Restraints of Conscience.*

Men are found in human society, and even women also, who teach that the distinction between virtue and vice is arbitrary, and opposed to the enjoyments of life. The highest good, in their ethics, consists in the gratification of every desire. The Bible is discarded; the apprehensions of retribution in a future world are derided; and the truths and motives of religion are treated with sneer and contempt. Books are published, and public lectures delivered, which oppose the claims of virtue and religion; and many who do not aspire to be authors, or public lecturers, exert their influence in a more private way, to loosen the restraints of moral

obligation. Against all such influence, whether publicly or privately exerted, all who love the peace and order of society, and who desire their own happiness, or the happiness of those whom they love, should guard with watchful care. Especially does it become the young, and those on whom the guardianship of the young devolves, to exercise this caution. When the restraints of moral obligation begin to be loosened, and when the youthful mind begins to feel itself free from the bonds which have confined and checked it, the beginning of destruction has arrived, and the brink of the precipice has been reached. Young man, young woman, retreat in time, or a fall into irretrievable ruin awaits you.

The power of conscience may be weakened indirectly, by inducing persons to act from motives which ought not to govern their conduct. Conscience ought to rule supreme over all other impulses to action. We act viciously, if we are moved by some other impulse to the neglect of conscience; and when we induce others to act in this manner, our influence over them is of injurious effect. It tends to impair the power of conscience, and injure the moral character. Some men, who pride themselves on their knowledge of mankind, use their knowledge to manage others, by approaching them on the weak side, and appealing to some passion or prejudice, which will move to such action as suits the purpose of the designing master mind. Thus demagogues and party-leaders govern the multitude; and, while they obtain their ends, do moral injury to the willing victims of their cunning. Even in religion, such demagogues are found; and, like Satan transformed into an angel of light, they excite unholy zeal for external forms, or barren orthodoxy, and deceive their followers with the persuasion that it is super-

eminent zeal for God. Another case in which religious leaders exert an injurious influence, occurs in the appeals which agents of benevolent societies sometimes address to men's vanity, to draw forth their contributions. What they give may be to a good object; and the gift would be an offering acceptable to God, if it proceeded from pure benevolence. But God searches the heart, understands the motive, and abhors the polluted sacrifice; so that, while the agent is pleased, and the deluded contributor is pleased, God is offended. Such agents may increase the funds of the societies that send them, but they pollute the fountains of Christian benevolence, from which they seek to draw their supplies.

## 2. *Exciting unlawful desires.*

Some desires are lawful, when duly subordinated to conscience, and others are in their very nature unlawful. We are forbidden to covet our neighbor's house, wife, man-servant, maid-servant, ox, or ass, or anything that is his. The prohibited desire is unlawful in its very lowest degree; and he who indulges it in himself, or excites it in others, sins against God.

The chief means of exciting unlawful desire consists in operating on the imagination. The object of desire must be conceived in the mind; and a skilful hand may so picture it to the imagination as to kindle desire, when it ought to excite loathing. It is thus that painting, fiction, and poetry, adorn pollution with splendid attire, and fascinate the young to their destruction. Through the enchantment produced, they convey moral poison into the unsuspecting heart of innocence, and the very elements of character are corrupted before danger is apprehended. If the man who kindles a fire in a city, to the destruction of its dwell-

ings, deserves punishment, much more does he deserve it who publishes, and sends forth through the community, corrupting books and prints, that kindle the fires of unholy passion in thousands of minds, and make conflagration of virtue and innocence.

### 3. *Facilitating actual Transgression.*

When the restraints of conscience have been thrown off, and unlawful desires excited in the breast, nothing is needed to produce actual transgression, but the presenting of opportunity. This the seducers of innocence effect in various methods.

The young man who has learned to scorn the counsels of pious parents, finds himself in the society of those who promise to show him the world. He commits himself to their guidance, full of curiosity, and panting for enjoyments beyond the narrow limits within which parental care has hitherto confined him. He is taught that it is manly to take a social glass, and the sparkling wine is presented to his lips, till he acquires a fondness for the intoxicating draught, and perhaps becomes ultimately a hopeless victim of drunkenness. Other sensual gratifications he learns to be within his reach, and, led on by his new companions, he visits the house which "is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps at some watering-place, where he has recently arrived, the inexperienced youth meets with one of nearly his own age, who seems by accident to fall in his way, and, with insinuating politeness, offers to conduct him through the curiosities of the place. He is at length brought into the gambling saloon; and, not suspecting that his polite companion is an appointed agent to decoy into this den of robbers, he accepts his

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. vii. 27.



invitation to become a partner with him in an adventure. He begins the game, and is at first permitted to win, until his consent to proceed has been fully gained, and the game is at last concluded, with the loss of his money, and an entrance into a life of profligacy.

Happily, the young of the female sex are exposed to fewer temptations: but the serpent lies in their path also. What methods are employed to entice them from virtue, it would be unavailing to unfold. Their only safety is found in avoiding the very beginnings of evil. If young females trifle with conscience, and permit their imaginations to become familiar with scenes of forbidden pleasure, they owe it to the general respect for female virtue, rather than to their own purity, and to the good providence of God, rather than to their own prudence, that they are not ensnared in the coils of the destroyer.

#### SECTION VIII. INJURY TO REPUTATION.

A MAN'S reputation is the opinion of others concerning him. The terms *character* and *reputation* are often used as if synonymous: but *character* signifies what a man is; and *reputation*, what he is thought to be. A man of bad character may, by a mistake of society, possess a good reputation; and a man of good character may, by the suspicions of the evil-minded, and the misrepresentations of the calumnious, be without reputation. The Son of God consented to dwell amidst a people of unclean lips; and, by exposing himself to their calumny, "made himself of no reputation:"<sup>1</sup> yet it cannot be said that he was without character.

Reputation is ordinarily the natural and necessary result of a man's actions; and, like the proceeds of labor in other cases, belongs to him by a right which is

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<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

as sacred as any other right, and ought to be free from violation. He who, by industry and good management, has acquired property, has, at the same time, gained a reputation for industry and good management, which may be to him the means of procuring future employment, and may thus be far more valuable than the property acquired. The robber who steals his property commits a flagrant wrong; but the slanderer who destroys his reputation, does far greater mischief, and deserves far greater punishment: and the criminality is the more atrocious, because the deed is perpetrated without the temptation of gain. The slanderer may gratify his hatred, or envy, or love of talking, by destroying his neighbor's reputation, but he impoverishes his neighbor without enriching himself.

*Evil Surmising.*

Reputation is the opinion of the community; and since I am one of the community, my opinion concerning my neighbor, is a part of his reputation. If I think less of him than I ought, I so far do wrong to his reputation. Hence we do wrong to others, when we judge them too unfavorably; and the wrong is not confined to them, but rebounds on ourselves. The habit of judging unfavorably, hardens the heart against the social affections and sympathies, on which our happy intercourse with others greatly depends. It is directly opposed to the charity which "thinketh no evil;"<sup>1</sup> and tends inevitably to cut us off from the sympathies and affections of others, and the approbation of heaven. "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 1, 2.

Love to our neighbor will incline us to admit his sincerity, and attribute to him no other motives than those from which he professes to act. We resent the wrong, if others ascribe to us motives which we disclaim; and we ought, therefore, to avoid such judgment of others. Some men earn a reputation for insincerity, to which they are justly entitled, and there is no necessity that we should be blind to their true character; but there is no merit in being the first to suspect the evil designs of others. Some persons pride themselves on their deep insight into human character; and when some unlovely feature, before unsuspected, has been disclosed, they are ready to exclaim, *I told you so*; but they do not inform us how many times they have suspected evil which never existed. They are perhaps deceived as often as the less suspicious; but if they are not, it is better to be deceived sometimes, than to cultivate in ourselves the habit of thinking evil; to keep the mind in perpetual disquiet, with the apprehension of suffering wrong from all who approach us; and to banish all confidence from the intercourse of human society. To deal with honest men as if they were rogues, is a maxim which savors of the wisdom from beneath, rather than of that which cometh from above. The peace and happiness of human society depend much on the cultivation of love and mutual confidence; and it is better that men should be surprised and shocked by occasional abuse of confidence, than that they should be perpetually prepared for it by sleepless suspicion.

Much of the strife which disturbs society, originates in evil surmising. An injurious suspicion once entertained, cannot be concealed without great difficulty. If not expressed in words, it produces a cautiousness in action, by which the other party is led to suspect and resent its existence. Mutual suspicion being engen-

dered, a fire is kindled within, which refuses to be smothered. If you would avoid strife and rage, check the very beginnings of evil surmising.

Since the most virtuous have imperfections, it is unjust, because of one failure, to judge the whole character corrupt. Peter denied his Master; but he notwithstanding loved and honored him, and suffered martyrdom in his cause. We ought not to judge a man destitute of any particular virtue, because he fails to exercise it in some one instance; and if it should be proved that he is totally destitute of a particular virtue, we ought not thence to conclude, that he is destitute of all virtue. Even the truly pious may have a sin that does easily beset them;<sup>1</sup> and those who have not renounced all for Christ, may, like the young ruler whom Jesus loved,<sup>2</sup> possess traits of character worthy to be loved and admired.

We should be careful not to suffer our estimate of others to be determined by their regard for us. "Sinners love those that love them;"<sup>3</sup> but righteous judgment is not founded on considerations so selfish. If a man has treated me unkindly, it does not follow that he is a bad man. Unkindness to me is not worse than unkindness to any other person; and if we strike from our list of friends all who have ever treated any one amiss, we shall have few names remaining. If we detect with keen perception, and decry with bold vociferation, the faults of our enemies or opponents, while we are blind to the faults of our friends, and those of our party; we do not judge according to righteousness. We should school ourselves to estimate every man, not by his bearing toward us, but by his true character.

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vi. 32.

*Evil Speaking.*

Few persons have their reputation so fully established as to be wholly beyond the reach of detraction; and few persons are so contemptible as to be wholly unable to injure the reputation of a neighbor. The tongue, therefore, needs to be restrained. An inspired writer has taught the necessity of this in the following impressive language: "Even so, the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is, tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."<sup>1</sup>

We do wrong to the reputation of a neighbor if, in the hearing of any third party, we charge him with crime, either falsely or unnecessarily. Too many think themselves justifiable in speaking what they please against others, so long as they say nothing but what they believe to be true. They surmise evil, and their superior sagacity discerns so many confirmations of their suspicion, that they take it at length for indubitable truth: or they may have heard the thing reported by some one, whose authority, though it might be questioned in other cases, they readily admit in this. They believe, because they are willing to believe, and what they believe they affirm. Now, if the thing reported, though believed, be not *known* to be true, he who reports it is guilty of lying: but, if it be known to be true, yet, if he reports it unnecessarily, he is guilty of slander.

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<sup>1</sup> James iii. 5, 6, 7.

OBJECTION.—The truth can wrong no one. He may have greater reputation than he deserves, and the truth may lessen it, but it cannot make it less than it ought to be, and therefore it cannot inflict wrong.

This objection assumes that every one who reports his neighbor's faults, has a right to sit in judgment on his reputation, and contract it whenever it extends too far. But why have I more right to diminish my neighbor's reputation, than to diminish his field, if he has placed his fence outside of the true boundary? If he has enclosed my grounds, I have a right to claim that his field shall be so far diminished as to leave me in the uninterrupted enjoyment of what rightfully belongs to me. So if my rights are affected by the extent of his reputation, I may claim what is my own, though his reputation should suffer loss. The possession of property, even when unjustly acquired, gives a right to exclude any one who has no better right. On the same principle the possession of reputation should exclude all encroachment, when not required by the rights of others. Hence we have no right to lessen the reputation of our neighbor, unless it becomes necessary in the fulfilment of our own duty. If we do it to gratify our hatred, or pride of superiority, or love of talking, we are guilty of slander.

Duty to a third party may require the giving of information against a neighbor. If I know that he is plotting to burn the house, or seduce the daughter of another, my duty requires that I should give so much information, as may be necessary to secure protection against the meditated injury; but it does not require that I should tell all I know, or all I suspect, concerning the author of the criminal design. Duty to society may require us to inform when the laws have been violated. He, who, in neglect of duty, conceals the

crimes or criminal designs of others, makes himself an accomplice in their guilt.

*Confidential Communication.*

Much slander is covered under the injunction of secrecy. Communications are seldom confidential unless they contain some statement which, if divulged, might bring the author into trouble; and, therefore, the injunction of secrecy often proceeds from cowardice, rather than conscientiousness. If I, from a sense of duty, communicate information to an individual, which he needs, but which it would be wrong to spread before the public, it is then my duty to require secrecy. But in too many cases, confidential communications do not proceed from a sense of duty, and are as useless to him who receives, as to him who makes them. The receiver has but little reason to feel flattered by the confidence which burdens him with an unprofitable and troublesome secret, criminally committed to his keeping.

*Convivial Defamation.*

Tea-table gossip is proverbially an entertainment of slander; and it is to be lamented, that this species of entertainment is not confined to parties of the idle and light-minded. Men of gravity too frequently lay aside their seriousness, and provoke merriment by dissecting the character of an absent individual. Some wit of the company holds up his foibles to ridicule, and all enjoy a rich repast, which would be sadly interrupted, if the subject of their merriment should unexpectedly appear among them. But if all that was said in his absence proceeded from pure brotherly love, why is not his arrival welcomed, that he may share in the feast of love and flow of soul? The merriment ceases, because all understand that no one desires to be the subject of

such convivial defamation; and, therefore, all who do to others as they would have others do to them, will hold the reputation of the absent too sacred to make it a subject of sport.

If the utterances of the tongue in the ordinary intercourse of society be carefully examined, any one who has not considered the subject, will be surprised to discover how much is said that may be justly styled slander. Why cannot topics of conversation be found, worthy of rational and immortal minds? Let the young acquire useful knowledge, and cultivate a delicate respect for the reputation of the absent; and they will then feel it a degradation, to associate with those who are incapable of higher enjoyment than the feast of scandal.

### *Libel.*

Written or printed slander is styled *libel*. In this form, it has greater permanence; and, if sent forth with the multiplying power of the press, may fly with increased velocity, and operate with more extended injury. The strife of political parties gives frequent occasion for this species of crime, against which all have great need to guard, who edit political newspapers, or write for them in times of party excitement. But the most unsuitable place for libel, is the column of a religious newspaper. The cause of him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, is grossly dishonored, when newspapers, professedly devoted to the dissemination of pure and undefiled religion, are polluted with slanderous publications, in which religious partisans assail the reputation of each other. On this abuse of the press, the God of truth and holiness frowns; and the effects of it on vital godliness, are blasting and destruction.



## SECTION IX. INJUSTICE TO BRUTES.

THOUGH brutes are not moral beings, God has provided enjoyments for them ; and men are under moral obligation not to intercept his bounty. Hence, brutes have rights, and may be treated with injustice.

God has given man dominion over brutes, and authority to use them for food. He may command their services, when he can make them labor for him ; and he may put them to death, when he needs their bodies for meat, or when they dispute with him the possession of the earth, or disturb his peaceful occupancy of it. But God has given him no right to treat brutes with cruelty. Beasts used for labor, ought to be fed, and otherwise provided for ; and those which are killed for food, ought to be put to death with as little pain as possible. We have no right to harm wild animals which we do not need for food, and which do not incommode us ; or to put any animal to pain, whether wild or tame, for the mere purpose of sport.

The obligation to treat brutes with kindness, is taught in the Holy Scriptures, which declare that "a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast."<sup>1</sup> Brutes are sentient, as well as men ; and no one whose heart is not cruel, can take pleasure in putting them to torture. He who tortures flies for amusement, is preparing himself, if he should obtain power over human lives, to sacrifice them to his fiendish pleasure, and to derive higher enjoyment from the sport, according to the higher nature of his victims.

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xii. 10.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DUTIES OF BENEVOLENCE.

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#### SECTION I. OBLIGATION.

THE means of enjoyment which the bountiful Creator has provided for mankind, he has chosen to distribute unequally; and this inequality furnishes occasion for the exercise of benevolence. The duties of reciprocity, considered in the last chapter, make no change in the inequality of distribution. If a rich man buys a horse from his poor neighbor, and pays the exact value in corn or money, the inequality of their wealth is not affected by the exchange; but if he gives the corn or money without receiving an equivalent, he performs an act of benevolence, which brings the amount of their possessions nearer to equality by lessening the abundance of his wealth, and increasing the scanty supplies of the other. Such acts of benevolence it is the will of God that all men should perform, according to the means which he has granted them, and the wants which he gives them opportunity to relieve.

1. The obligation of benevolence is enforced by conscience. Selfish as the human heart is, it is not wholly devoid of sympathy and benevolent affections. Conscience restrains our selfishness, and reproves if we withhold what is due to others; but conscience never opposes benevolent affections, or upbraids us for their exercise. On the contrary, some of our highest moral

pleasures result from acts of kindness to others; and men who practise benevolence, have always found the words of Christ verified in their experience—"It is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>1</sup> Nor is the conscience of the benevolent man the only witness that testifies to the excellence of the virtue. Even selfish men admire and approve the conduct which they are unable to imitate; and though such men as the philanthropic Howard are exceedingly rare, the men who can fail to admire their virtues, are equally rare. However diverse the moral sentiments of mankind may be on other points, all men approve benevolence.

2. The state of human society calls for the exercise of benevolence. Everywhere we see widows and orphans to be relieved, sick to be visited, hungry to be fed, and naked to be clothed; or, if cases of extreme want and suffering do not obtrude themselves on our notice, we need not search far or long to find those whose hearts may be gladdened by our kindness. This constitution of human society calls for benevolence, and gives opportunity for its exercise. Were all so happy that no drop could be added to their cup of enjoyment, the call for benevolence would not, as now, assail us from every quarter. God could have distributed the means of enjoyment equally, and have filled every cup to the brim; but, though he delights in the happiness of his creatures, he delights in virtue more, and chooses to give opportunity for its exercise. The Book of his providence teaches the lesson on every page, that he requires us to be benevolent.

Lest we should be slow to learn our duty from the wants of others, our Creator has made us liable to wants ourselves. Every one knows that his lot is not

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 35.

beyond the reach of suffering, and that an occasion may possibly arise in which he may need the sympathy and aid of others. Even self-love presses on us the obligation to relieve the sufferings of others; and, though it cannot supply the proper motives for the performance of the duty, it can teach us the folly of neglecting it.

3. The Holy Scriptures clearly teach the duty of benevolence. Everywhere throughout the sacred volume, the duty of giving to the poor, and relieving the suffering, is enforced by the authority of God; and his approbation of benevolence is declared with promises of blessing, and his wrath is denounced against the cruel and oppressive.

4. The duty of benevolence is taught by divine example. God is good to all; and, without benevolence, we cannot be the children of our Father in heaven. The experience of every moment furnishes proof of God's incessant kindness to us; and, if we admire and love the Author of our mercies, we shall take pleasure in imitating his benevolence. Grateful for his blessings received, we shall rejoice to dispense blessings to others.

The goodness of God in creation and providence, is an example which nature presents for our imitation; but the Holy Scriptures direct our minds to the higher example of his goodness, in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. From the love of God in the gift of his Son, and from the love of Christ in dying for our salvation, the Scriptures infer our obligation to love our fellow-men, and to be willing even to lay down our lives for our brethren.

#### SECTION II. RULE.

THE duties of reciprocity may be defined with precision. For everything received, they require an equiv-

alent to be given; and the value of the commodities exchanged, may be determined by the current estimates of buyers and sellers. But a rule equally determinate cannot be prescribed for acts of benevolence. Much is left to individual choice, according to the words of Christ: "Ye have the poor with you always, and *whenever ye will*, ye may do them good."<sup>1</sup> The precise time and the precise amount of our benevolence, are not definitely commanded; but there are considerations which may assist us in determining our duty.

1. The exercise of benevolent desire ought to be uncircumscribed and unintermitted. Its first proper objects are those nearest to us, members of the same family. Beyond this circle, it extends to the neighborhood, and to the whole country, and to all mankind. Though it may embrace kindred and friends first, it must not be confined to these, but must extend to strangers, and even to enemies. Christ said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."<sup>2</sup> Our acts of benevolence are necessarily limited according to our ability; but our benevolent desires may flow wide as the world. Acts of benevolence cannot be without intermission; but the flow of benevolent desire ought to be as water from a perennial fountain. Like a pent-up stream seeking vent, it should be ready to burst forth into action, whenever opportunity occurs.

2. Our obligation to perform acts of benevolence, must be determined according to our means. The father of a family is not bound to give to the children of his neighbor, the food which his own children need for their sustenance. Benevolence does not require

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<sup>1</sup> Mark xiv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 44.

me to give to a beggar the bread, without which I shall myself die of hunger. But such extreme cases seldom occur; and men are seldom in danger of exhausting their means by doing good to others. But they too commonly confine their benevolence within limits which leave to themselves the undisturbed enjoyment, not only of the necessities and comforts, but also of the luxuries to which they may have been accustomed. Such benevolence does not deserve the name. We have not approached the limit of our obligation, if we have not found some self-denial necessary. We have the example of Christ proposed for our imitation, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,<sup>1</sup> and the Redeemer commended the liberality of the poor widow, who gave "all that she had, even all her living."<sup>2</sup> If these divine instructions do not bind us to give away our wealth till it is literally exhausted, they certainly bind us to consider it the Lord's, and ourselves his stewards, appointed to use at his will, what he has intrusted to our hands. With this sense of responsibility to God, as proprietor of all things, deeply fixed in our hearts, and with the knowledge that he loveth a cheerful giver,<sup>3</sup> we can scarcely err in the disposal of what he has committed to our stewardship.

3. Our obligation to perform acts of benevolence must be determined according to the wants which Providence gives us opportunity to supply. There are years of plenty, as well as of famine; and in seasons of abundance, the benevolent man is justified in laying by in store for the time to come. When but few wants call for relief, he may give but little; but as his store accumulates, he should remember that the Lord per-

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 9.<sup>2</sup> Mark xii. 44.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 7.

mits its increase, for some approaching time of need; and he should hold it in readiness for the future demand. But that benevolence is spurious, which neglects a present opportunity of doing good, under the plea of providing for future necessity. It distrusts God's providence, and violates his command.

4. Our acts of benevolence should vary in kind, according to the nature of the wants which call for relief. Wants may be physical, intellectual, or moral; and, in every case, the relief to be afforded must correspond to the nature of the want. If a man is hungry, give him food; if he is naked, give him clothing. But supplies of food and clothing for the mortal body, cannot enrich the immortal mind. If a man is sick, we may perform towards his suffering body, acts of kindness like those of the compassionate Samaritan;<sup>1</sup> but such kindness is ineffectual to reach the malady of sin that preys on the soul. True benevolence will seek, by all appropriate means, to instruct the ignorant, and reform the vicious. Here it finds its highest and noblest sphere of action. The establishment of schools to teach the young, who would otherwise grow up without the means of instruction; and the sending forth of missionaries to preach the gospel to the heathen, who would otherwise perish for lack of knowledge; are acts of benevolence pleasing to God, and full of blessing to mankind.

#### SECTION III. PHYSICAL BENEFACTION.

WHEN men suffer hunger because they will not earn bread, and cold because they are too indolent to provide clothing and habitation for themselves; benevolence does not require that we should give them permanent

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<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 33-36.

relief. It is better that they should be left to suffer. God has ordained that he who will not work shall not eat;<sup>1</sup> and we do wrong to oppose this wise arrangement of his providence. Physical want is a less evil than indolent or vicious habits; and if God designs it to be a cure for these, we ought not to contravene his discipline. True benevolence requires that we permit the remedy which he applies to take effect. Temporary and partial relief ought to be given, even to the indolent, in cases of extreme want and suffering; but care should be taken not to encourage their idleness.

Frequently the poor suffer, not because they are unwilling to labor, but because they cannot find employment. In this case we ought to give present relief by supplying the wants which now oppress them; and, if possible, place them in circumstances in which they can provide for themselves. This is far more benevolent than to support them in idleness. Though labor has been inflicted on man as a curse for disobedience, God's goodness has converted it into a blessing; and all, if possible, ought to enjoy the benefit.

Public charity is unwisely directed, when it supports paupers in idleness, who are able to labor. Besides the evil of being without employment, they acquire a habit of dependence, inconsistent with self-respect, and in its tendency degrading and demoralizing. Another evil of the plan is, that the supply excites no gratitude in the heart of the recipient. He learns to claim it as a right; perhaps murmurs at its scantiness, or complains of some injustice in the manner of its distribution. All benefactions to the poor, ought, if possible, to be so dispensed, as to cultivate in them the ennobling virtue of gratitude, and a spirit of manly self-reliance.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 10.



When paupers are maintained in idleness, they have no opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of doing good. They receive what barely supplies their wants; and in appropriating it habitually to themselves, the spirit of selfishness is cherished. The pauper is greatly elevated, when he is placed in circumstances in which he can sustain himself, and feel his independence; but he is exalted to a blissful eminence, if he can become the benefactor of others, and enjoy the luxury of giving.

Charity should be rendered to the sick and the aged, without exacting service from them in return; and it ought to be rendered cheerfully, and without upbraiding. It may be, that they would not now be dependent, if, in better days, they had been as industrious and frugal as they ought to have been; but it is now too late to remedy the indolence and improvidence which may have caused their present poverty. If, on the plea that they deserve to suffer, we decline to relieve the wants that oppress them, we fail in benevolence, and do injury to our own moral character. We may allude to their past conduct, if we can, by judicious comments on it, promote their moral good; but we may not substitute upbraidings for alms, and wound the spirit instead of relieving the body.

The bestowing of charity blesses him who gives, as well as him who receives. It is, in general, better that it be dispensed in person, than by proxy; because better opportunity is given for the cultivation of benevolent feeling in the giver. The sight of the misery to be relieved, and the personal converse with the suffering, deepen the sense of our obligation; and it enhances the pleasure of the benevolence, to see with our own eyes the relief which it yields. He who contents himself to relieve the poor and suffering, not by visiting them in their affliction, but by contributing to some

public fund for charity, loses much of the benefit which he might derive from his beneficence. In the last day the Judge will say, "I was sick, and ye visited me."<sup>1</sup> We are not informed that he will say, I was sick, and ye sent unto me. To send relief to the suffering is well; but to visit and relieve is better, and will be specially honored by the approving notice of the Great Judge.

The benevolent man derives greater benefit from his charity, when it is dispensed in secret. Christ's rule for alms-giving is, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."<sup>2</sup> Alms given to be seen of man, may gratify the love of applause, but cannot have the approbation of an enlightened conscience, and will not receive reward from our Father in heaven. He who desires to free his heart from the influence of unworthy motives, will prefer, when it is practicable, to bestow his alms when there is no witness but God. He may have much pleasure in relieving the sufferer; but his highest pleasure flows from a sense of the divine approbation; and he enjoys this the more, because it is undisturbed by the desire or hope of human applause.

#### SECTION IV. INTELLECTUAL BENEFACTION.

THE improvement of the intellect is an important benefit, which it is often in our power to confer on others. Knowledge is the food of the mind; without which it remains dwarfish and imbecile. To give knowledge is a more noble benefaction than to give bread; as the mind is more noble than the body. It has the further advantage, that it is enduring. The bread which is consumed to-day, cannot be eaten again to-morrow; but knowledge acquired, is a continual feast. The stores laid up in childhood and youth, supply our

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vi. 3.

mature years, and continue, without diminution, through old age, furnishing a perpetual banquet, and imparting vigor and activity to the mind. This intellectual improvement fits men to occupy a higher station in society; and is, in general, far more valuable than mere physical strength towards the earning of bread. It is, moreover, capable of indefinite propagation. The bread that we eat perishes; and we are compelled to lay aside from our bread-corn, however much we may desire it for present enjoyment, a sufficient quantity to sow for a future crop. But the knowledge on which one mind feeds, instead of being consumed and lost, may be scattered into a thousand other minds; and in each one may be seed producing a future crop, capable of supplying intellectual nourishment, and means for further propagation. These considerations invite the benefactors of mankind to direct their efforts to a higher end than the mere supply of physical wants.

In conferring intellectual benefit, there is not the same danger of encouraging idleness, that attends the giving of alms to the poor. This danger might exist in its full force, if we could pour knowledge into the mind, as the sun pours its light into the eye: but knowledge cannot be acquired by a merely passive recipient. It must, in the most favorable circumstances, be obtained by labor. To give a favorable opportunity of laboring for it, is a wise benevolence—similar to that which gives employment to the poor, by which they may earn bread. Moreover, the aid afforded for the acquisition of knowledge, is usually limited from necessity to a short period of early life; and the beneficiary knows that the time of receiving the benefit cannot last. He is, therefore, in little danger of relying on it for future subsistence; but, if worthy of the favor conferred, he will feel the obligation to improve, with all possible diligence, the

short opportunity which it affords to fit himself for those efforts on which the usefulness and happiness of his whole life depend.

Some cases occur, in which genius presses through every obstacle, and, by its own unaided strength, comes forth into distinction. But every mind is not fitted for such efforts; nor is it necessary that every mind should be subjected to such trial of its strength. Thousands live in ignorance, and die unknown, who would have been distinguished ornaments to society, if friendly aid had been afforded at the moment that their genius, having explored the little field of knowledge within its own observation, sighed and labored to extend its research, but at length yielded to invincible necessity. Let those whose benevolence inclines them to give bread to the famishing, search also for such despairing genius, and impart to it the intellectual aliment which it craves, and which is needed to sustain and develop the powers that may glorify God, and bless mankind.

In bestowing intellectual benefits, it is often best to act by proxy. Many are able to give the means for obtaining instruction, who are not qualified to give the instruction itself. Hence the establishment of schools, the furnishing of them with libraries and scientific apparatus, and the contributing of funds for enabling the poor to avail themselves of these advantages, otherwise inaccessible and useless to them, are benefactions worthy of enlightened philanthropy. They may sometimes, like the blessings of Providence, be received by the ungrateful, or abused to vicious purposes; but the charity in which they originate, resembles the divine benevolence from which the blessings of Providence flow.

Funds for the support of public schools have sometimes failed to produce their proper benefits, not be-

cause gratuitous education is injurious to the young, but because the funds have been badly managed, or the schools badly conducted, or because parents have not rightly appreciated the advantages brought within their reach. When schools are established by law, the wisdom of legislators should seek to guard, as much as possible, against these causes of failure.

#### SECTION V. MORAL BENEFACTION.

SIN is the greatest of all evils; and to deliver from it is the greatest benefit that it is possible to confer. Though a man should enjoy all the blessings which wealth can procure, and though his mind be enriched with all the treasures of literature and science, yet he cannot be happy if his heart be under the dominion of vicious passions. The wicked man is the enemy of God, the enemy of mankind, and the enemy of himself. His life on earth, whatever may be its seeming pleasures, is a vain pursuit of happiness, which always retires as he approaches, and, when it appears within his reach, always eludes his grasp. But the pleasures of the present life, though very vanity, are his only good; for, in the world to come, his only portion is everlasting woe. Hence, to save a man from his sins, and their terrible consequences, is a benefaction far greater than to relieve all his physical wants, or to bestow the highest possible cultivation on his intellectual powers.

Wicked men are a curse to human society. Every one of them is a centre of moral pestilence, infecting the community with plague and death. To reform a vicious man is to render a source of malignant influence healthful, and to confer a rich benefit on society. It is a work of benevolence, not to the wicked man only

who is its immediate object, but to the world in which he dwells.

A wicked man perverts the noble nature that God has given him, and dishonors the Author of his being. He is in rebellion against his Sovereign, and at war with the best interests of the universe. To reform such an one is a service to God, tending to establish his boundless and everlasting dominion. God requires this service, and promises to reward it with distinguished honor. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup>

The duty of laboring for the deliverance of men from sin, is recommended by the example of Christ. He came into the world to save his people from their sins.<sup>2</sup> To this work his whole mediation was directed; and, in the accomplishment of it, he gave his life a sacrifice. His apostles labored and suffered in the same cause, and willingly exposed themselves to every danger, and suffered every privation, that they might save men from sin. They esteemed no other service which it was possible for them to render, so acceptable to God, or so beneficial to mankind; and we must agree with them in this estimate, if our judgments are enlightened by the wisdom from above.

The means to be employed for the moral reformation of the wicked, are:

1. *Moral and religious instruction.*—Men need to be taught their relation to God and his moral government, that they may fully comprehend the nature and extent of their moral obligations. It is important that they should understand the beneficial tendency and effects of virtue, and the destructive influence of vice for time

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<sup>1</sup> Dan. xii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. i. 21.

and eternity. Above all, they should be made acquainted with the gospel, which unfolds God's scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, and which God has appointed to be the means of moral reform to mankind; for "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."<sup>1</sup> These means of religious instruction should be sent to the nations that are in the darkness of heathenism; and should be applied to men of every age, but especially to the young, whose minds are not yet under the full control of sinful habits.

2. *Affectionate Entreaty*.—A cold inculcation of moral and religious truth, is not all that is needed for the moral benefit of men; nor is it all that duty requires. The apostles of Christ *besought* men to be reconciled to God;<sup>2</sup> and Jesus Christ wept over impenitent Jerusalem, and expressed his compassion for the wicked inhabitants in language of exquisite tenderness.<sup>3</sup> The condition of the wicked ought to excite our pity; and we cannot better exhibit our compassionate regard for them, than by affectionate exhortation to forsake sin, and flee from the wrath to come.

3. *Holy Example*.—The wicked ought to be contemplated with mingled emotions of benevolence and abhorrence: benevolence for their persons; abhorrence for their crimes. No proof that we abhor their crimes can be so effectual as a careful avoidance of them. Without this, our instructions and exhortations will be unavailing. If the truths and motives by which we seek to operate on them, fail to produce the proper effect on our own conduct, we shall be accounted insincere and hypocritical, when we urge them on others. Our bad example will more than nullify all the good words which our lips may utter. It will tend to make

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiii. 37.

men believe that all our instructions and exhortations, addressed to them for their reformation, are unworthy of their regard. Our benevolence may induce us to follow the example of Christ, in seeking and saving the lost ; but, though he ate and drank with publicans and sinners, he was, in moral purity, separate from sinners. Let us, if we would go about doing good as he did, imitate his purity, as well as his benevolence. Then will our actions speak to the heads and hearts of men a language which they cannot fail to understand, and the influence of which they will not find it easy to resist.

#### SECTION VI. FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

THE noblest and loveliest form of benevolence appears in the forgiveness of injuries. The Jewish interpreters of the Mosaic law maintained that we ought to love our neighbors, and hate our enemies ; but Christ rejected their interpretation of the sacred code, and taught that it is our duty to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us.<sup>1</sup> The New Testament very clearly teaches the obligation to forgive, and forbids us to indulge the hope of obtaining forgiveness from God, if we do not forgive those that trespass against us.<sup>2</sup> A forgiving spirit, therefore, is essential to the Christian character.

The obligation to forgive is enforced by the divine example. We are exhorted to be kind and tender-hearted, and forgiving one another as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.<sup>3</sup> The divine forgiveness extends to enemies : " For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 43, 44.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xi. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 32.



\* \* \* For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled," &c.<sup>1</sup> Hence, if we would be the children of our Father in heaven, we must forgive our enemies. And, if we possess the spirit of Christ, we shall exercise this forgiving spirit, at the very time that we are suffering most severely from the malignant hands of those who hate and persecute us. He died, praying for those who crucified him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."<sup>2</sup>

When we see injury inflicted on another, we feel that the perpetrator of it deserves punishment. When the injury is inflicted on ourselves, we not only judge the injurer to be worthy of punishment, but we feel strongly impelled to punish him. This propensity to take vengeance in our own hands, Christianity requires us to subdue; and directs us to commit our case to the Lord, who says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."<sup>3</sup> This forbearance to retaliate, is the first step in forgiveness.

But true forgiveness is something more than the mere absence of retaliation. It renders good for evil. It seeks to relieve the wants of the injurer, physical, intellectual, or moral; and, instead of attempting to punish him, or imprecating the divine vengeance on him, prays that he may be forgiven, and may receive every blessing from God which is needed to make him happy. In all this, it resembles the divine forgiveness, which makes the object of it blest for ever.

Christian forgiveness is a most effectual means of conferring moral benefit on the injurer. If we return evil for evil, we excite his malignant passions to inflict further and greater injury; but if we return love for hatred, kindness for wrong, we present a spectacle of

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 7-10.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiii. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xii. 19.

virtue to which he is not accustomed ; and we bring it so near, that he is compelled to contemplate it. If not lost to all sense of virtue, he admires while he contemplates ; and his malignant passions, instead of being excited to further aggression, are subdued. This is an end which Paul has proposed to be sought, by doing good to the injurious. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."<sup>1</sup> As a mass of metal may be melted by heaping coals of fire on it, so the hard heart of an injurious man may be softened by acts of kindness.

We are under obligation to show benevolence to any wicked man, though sustaining no special relation to us ; but when he becomes our injurer, he voluntarily assumes a relation to us, which gives us the most favorable opportunity of doing him good. A truly benevolent mind, delighting to confer moral benefit on the wicked, as the highest possible benefaction, will rejoice to embrace so favorable an opportunity, when offered. How sad is the mistake, when, yielding to the impulse of passion, we neglect such an opportunity of doing good, and by returning evil for evil, harden in crime one whom we might have gained over to virtue !

To forgive, is honorable. False honor teaches men to revenge injuries, and to account it mean-spirited to forgive, or even to forbear. Men who know not God, may think it honorable to punish a slight insult with death ; but he who seeks the honor that cometh from God, cannot so judge. Forgiveness is a God-like virtue, and is therefore most honorable.

A forgiving temper, though it may fail to produce

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 20, 21.

its proper effect on the injurer, always blesses him who exercises it. The man who avenges a wrong, may have the pleasure of gratified pride, but he who forgives it, has the more exalted pleasure of virtue. His conscience approves, and rewards him with inward peace, calm and serene, elevated far above the reach of pride and passion, and resembling the blessedness of God.

The practice of forgiveness promotes the public good. Revenge tends to perpetuate wrong in a continued series of retaliations; forgiveness tends to annihilate wrong, by cutting short its progress at once. Revenge makes its ultimate appeal to cunning or physical force, and tends to subject to their control the welfare of mankind; forgiveness appeals to moral feeling, and tends to establish the universal dominion of virtue.

## CHAPTER X.

### DUTIES OF VERACITY.

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#### SECTION I. OBLIGATION OF VERACITY.

SUCH is the condition of mankind, that knowledge is indispensable to the preservation of life, the enjoyment of its pleasures, and the performance of its duties. A part of this knowledge is derived from our own experience and observation; but far the larger part is obtained from the information of others. Language is the medium which the Creator has designed for the conveyance of information from one mind to another; and, that the design be not frustrated, it is necessary that the information conveyed be true. If all the utterances of language were falsehood, every man would be compelled to rely on his own experience and observation; and, instead of deriving benefit from society, he would be in continual danger of being deceived and misled to his ruin. Since God has formed man for society, has made his well-being, to a great degree, dependent on society, has made language indispensable to secure the benefits of society, and truth indispensable to secure the benefits of language; we are sure that God wills men to speak the truth. The demonstration is perfect. We have not better proof, that God designed the human body to be sustained by food.

Further proof of the obligation to speak the truth,

may be drawn from the tendency which may be observed in men generally, to speak the truth, when not under the influence of some corrupting motive; and from the tendency, equally observable, to believe what is said, until experience has taught suspicion; and from the decisions of conscience, approving truth, and condemning falsehood. However prevalent falsehood may be, the moral judgment of mankind is against it; and the man who firmly and undeviatingly speaks the truth, even when pressed with temptations to prevaricate, is held to be worthy of honor. Falsehood is not the language of uncorrupted nature; but proceeds from art: and men never resort to it, but for the accomplishment of some vicious purpose.

The obligation to speak the truth, may be proved by many passages of the Holy Scriptures. The judgments of God on Gehazi,<sup>1</sup> and on Ananias and Sapphira,<sup>2</sup> show God's abhorrence of falsehood; and we are warned that liars shall have their part in the lake of fire.<sup>3</sup>

The obligation of veracity is not identical with that of reciprocity, or of benevolence. We may communicate true and useful information to a neighbor, in return for kindness received from him, or merely to gratify our own benevolent desire; and in such cases it would be a sin against reciprocity or benevolence, to remain silent; but it would not be a sin against veracity. The obligation of veracity is distinct. It does not in general determine when we shall speak; but it binds us always when we do speak, to speak the truth. If we speak the truth to a person, because he has a right to it, we fulfil the obligation of both veracity and reciprocity; and we violate the obligations of both, if we speak falsehood to one who has a right to the truth. But if we

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings v. 21-27.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v. 1, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xxi. 8.

utter falsehood to any one, because he has no right to the truth, though we do not sin against reciprocity, we sin against veracity. The obligation to speak the truth, is founded directly on the will of God, and not on the right of him whom we address. Truth is, in God, an attribute distinct from justice and benevolence ; and, in men, it is a distinct virtue.

The obligation of veracity is violated, if we utter for truth what we know to be false. The laws of language allow the use of figures of speech, in which there is a departure from literal truth. He who says *Achilles is a lion*, speaks what is not literally true ; but he does not expect what he says to be taken for literal truth ; and, therefore, does not violate the law of veracity. On this ground the use of fables and parables is justified.

The obligation of veracity is violated, if we utter for truth what we do not know to be true. What we consider probable, or receive as true on the testimony of others, we may state as probable, or as testified by others ; but if we affirm it to be true, we are responsible for what we say, and transgress the law of veracity. We may be mistaken as to a fact, through the failure of the senses or of the memory. In this case the obligation is to speak what we suppose ourselves to know ; or in other words, to speak to the best of our knowledge and belief.

The obligation of veracity may be violated by tones, gestures, or the use of equivocal words ; or by an artful arrangement of facts ; or by exaggerating some circumstance, and extenuating or omitting some other. The rule in giving testimony is, to convey to others, as exactly as we can, the conceptions of our own minds, without increase or diminution ; to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The obligation of veracity is universal. It binds at

home and abroad, in the intercourse of business or of fashion, and whether we address one or many. Falsehood does not cease to be falsehood, when uttered in jest; and what are called innocent lies, blunt the sensibility of the conscience, and prepare for wider departures from strict virtue. Children and servants should be taught the obligation of strict veracity; and they who approve in them slight departures from truth, are weakening the power of conscience, and doing essential injury to their moral character.

The fallibility of men gives occasion to distinguish between physical truth and moral truth. Physical truth is agreement with fact; moral truth is agreement with the mental conception of the speaker. A man may, by mistaking a fact, chance to speak what is physically true, when he supposes himself to speak falsehood. In this case he is morally guilty of lying, notwithstanding the physical truth of what he utters.

#### SECTION II. PROMISES.

SINCE moral truth consists in agreement with the mental conception of the speaker, it always refers to the present state of his mind at the time of his speaking, but what is said may agree physically with the past or the future. The present state of the speaker's mind may be a memory of some past fact. In this case, when he expresses his conception, he gives his testimony concerning that fact. Or the present state may be an intention to perform some future action. In this case, the expression of this intention is a *promise* to perform that act.

Moral truth, in promises, requires an agreement with the mental conception or intention of the speaker. If he promises what he does not intend to perform, he is guilty of falsehood, even though he afterwards change

his mind and perform the act promised. A past fact testified, or a future act promised, may agree physically with what a speaker says; but to constitute what he says morally true, it must agree with his present mental conception.

In making a promise, the primary obligation of veracity requires that what is promised agree precisely with the intention of the promisor; but there is a secondary obligation, which refers to the fulfilment of the promise. The rule on this subject is, that a promise to do a possible and lawful act binds the promisor to fulfil it, according to the expectation voluntarily created. If the act promised be impossible, or contrary to the law of God, the promise is not obligatory. If the promiser knew the impossibility or unlawfulness when he made the promise, he committed a crime for which he is bound to repent; and he is bound to make amends to the promisee, unless he also knew the impossibility or unlawfulness of what was promised.

An unexpressed intention to confer a benefit on an individual has not the obligation of a promise, nor has an intention expressed only to a third party. Neither does such an intention become a promise, if the party to be benefited obtains knowledge of the design not voluntarily communicated. It is possible for subsequent events or disclosures to release from the obligation of a promise; but in this case, the promiser is bound to see that no one receives injury from his failure to fulfil.

Were the obligation to fulfil a promise strictly identical with the obligation of veracity, it would not be dependent on the expectation created, but would attach equally to the intention made known to a third party. A promise confers the right of expectation; and whether it is made in return for something received, or merely



out of benevolence, it is as if property were conveyed, which cannot be afterwards reclaimed at the pleasure of the donor. Hence, the obligation to fulfil a promise may be referred to reciprocity; but a failure to fulfil, justly creates a suspicion of the promiser's veracity at the time of making the promise. Hence, one who desires his reputation for veracity to be untarnished, will be careful to fulfil his promises.

The expectation, voluntarily created, furnishes the rule for interpreting the language of a promise. Being the ground of the obligation, it also determines its extent. A promiser is bound by his promise, in the sense in which he supposed the promisee to understand it.

### SECTION III. CONTRACTS.

A CONTRACT is a mutual promise; and the obligation to fulfil it is subject to the same rules and exceptions as appertain to promises. A contract may contain a conditional promise, which, like any other conditional promise, is not obligatory if the condition be not performed.

The failure of one party to fulfil a contract, sometimes releases the other party from all obligation, and may even entitle him to damages. But in many cases the failing party ought to receive compensation for partial benefit rendered; and, in such contracts as marriage, the failure of one party does not usually release the other party from obligation.

Since a promise to perform an unlawful act is not obligatory, the promises of a contract cannot be binding if made in violation of the divine law. A matrimonial contract cannot be made for a shorter period of time than life. If made at all, it must be made in accordance with the law of the Creator.

The obligation to fulfil contracts, binds societies as well as individuals. It is a false plea that corporations have no conscience. If a corporation consists of human beings, every one of them has a conscience; and every one of them brings guilt on himself, if he consents to the violation of a contract, or fails to use his best endeavor to prevent it.

The treaties which nations make with each other are contracts which ought to be sacredly inviolate. A strong nation may have nothing to fear from man if it violates a treaty with a feeble one, unable to avenge the wrong: but there is verily a God who judgeth in the earth, and who will assuredly punish such perfidy.

#### SECTION IV. OATHS.

It is frequently of great importance, in cases of controversy between men, to ascertain facts, on which the rights of the parties depend. Persons, to whom these facts may be known, may have interests inclining them either not to testify, or to testify falsely. To protect the citizens in the enjoyment of their rights, civil government needs some means for eliciting the truth; and, for this purpose, it requires testimony to be given on oath. The witness is made to invoke the displeasure of God on him, if he speaks falsehood; and, by this means, higher interests are brought to counteract the influence of those which incline to the giving of false testimony. Moreover, the laws provide special penalties for the crime of perjury. By the two-fold apprehension of suffering from both God and man, the strongest possible guard against falsehood is presented.

In oaths, appeal is made to the omniscience and the justice of God. As omniscient, he knows every fact to which any witness may be required to testify; or rather the mental conception to which the testimony,

if morally true, must correspond; and, as just, he is expected to punish, with severity, those who presumptuously use his name to sanction falsehood. The appeal to justice is made in such words as, "God do so to me, and more also;" or, "So help me God." These expressions signify the consent of the person who takes the oath, that the judgment of God may fall on him, if he speaks falsehood; that the help and favor which he hopes to receive from God, may be suspended on the truth of what he declares. Such an appeal is of awful import; and, if made irreverently, must be offensive to God; but, if his law authorizes such appeal, and it be made for just cause, and in a right spirit, we must regard it as a solemn act of religious worship.

That God's law does authorize oaths, may be argued from the third commandment, which appears to have primary reference to such invocation of his name. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."<sup>1</sup> Any irreverent use of God's name may be understood to be prohibited by the spirit of this commandment; but to take God's name in vain, probably imports to use the authority of his name unworthily. So interpreted, the commandment forbids perjury and profane swearing. As the command, "Thou shalt not steal," proves the right of property; so the command, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," proves the lawfulness of using the authority of his name, when not in vain. A commandment which guards against the abuse of oaths, implies the lawfulness of their use.

The lawfulness of oaths may be argued from the example of God himself, who is frequently represented

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. xx. 7.

in Scripture as speaking on oath;<sup>1</sup> by the example of holy men before the giving of the law;<sup>2</sup> by the express requirement of oaths in the Mosaic code;<sup>3</sup> by the example of Paul, who, in his epistles, uses the solemnity of an oath;<sup>4</sup> by the declaration of the same apostle, describing the necessity and proper use of an oath to be for the end of strife;<sup>5</sup> and by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in his trial before the Jewish court, allowed himself to be put on oath, and gave on oath the answer for which he was condemned to die.<sup>6</sup>

An oath, being an act of religious worship, requires a solemn sense of God's character, and of our accountability to him. In making the solemn appeal, the lifting up of the hand is an appropriate ceremony. The kissing of the Bible, though in common use, is less appropriate. The angel mentioned in 10th chapter of Revelation, did not kiss the book which he had in his hand, and which the best commentators understand to be the Bible, but swore by lifting up his hand to heaven.

In oaths, all mental reservation is inadmissible, and all purposed use of equivocal language. He who takes the oath, must understand and use words in the sense in which he supposes they will be understood by those for whose assurance the oath is taken.

Promissory oaths are often taken by persons who enter on some office, and thereby bind themselves to the faithful performance of its duties. The thing promised, must be lawful, and within the power of him who engages to perform it.

Several objections to the lawfulness of oaths need to be considered.

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxii. 16; Ps. lxxxix. 3; Heb. vii. 21. <sup>2</sup> Gen. xiv. 22; xlvii. 29-31; 1. 25. <sup>3</sup> Ex. xxii. 10, 11; Deut. vi. 13. <sup>4</sup> Rom. i. 9; 2 Cor. i. 23; Gal. i. 20. <sup>5</sup> Heb. vi. 16. <sup>6</sup> Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.

**OBJECTION 1.**—Christ commanded, “Swear not at all \* \* \* but let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.”<sup>1</sup> The same command is repeated by one of the inspired writers.<sup>2</sup>

The command of Christ must not be understood to condemn his own example. He acknowledged the authority of the Jewish law, and, in obedience to it, took the oath administered by the high priest; but he did not use oaths in his ordinary discourse. His command, “Swear not at all,” refers to ordinary “communication,” which was to be, “yea, yea; nay, nay,” and does not refer to the testimony required by law. The same interpretation must be given to the other passage of Scripture cited in the objection.

**OBJECTION 2.**—Human knowledge and human virtue are so imperfect, that no one has a right to peril his soul on the truth of what he says; and the laws of society have no right to require it.

If human imperfection renders oaths morally wrong, the Mosaic law would not have required them. They were not a part of its ceremonies, adapted specially to their worship, and abolished at the coming of Christ. They possess intrinsic moral quality; and, if essentially wrong, could not have formed a part of the judicial code, given by God himself to his ancient people.

Oaths bind to moral, not physical truth; and, therefore, the imperfection of human knowledge is not a valid objection to their use. We are required to swear “to the best of our knowledge and belief.” An honest utterance of the mind is all that the oath requires; and a sense of our ignorance need not make us fear to be honest. But it is alleged that human virtue is also weak. If this imperfection can excuse from a

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 34-37.

<sup>2</sup> James v. 12.

solemn appeal to God, it can excuse from a final arraignment at his bar. In oaths we consent to the scrutiny and judgment of God; and to these we are compelled to submit, whether we consent or not. The oath presses on the conscience a responsibility which cannot be evaded, and needs to be felt. The imperfection of human virtue, so far from being a valid objection to the use of oaths, renders their use necessary.

The objection applies with most plausibility to oaths of office, in which an individual promises to perform the duties to the best of his ability. The facts which are testified on oath, being past and fixed, are necessarily definite, and unaffected by any imperfection of the witness; but the future acts of one who takes a promissory oath, are indefinite, and dependent on the will of the promiser. On this account, it has been alleged that promissory oaths are unavoidably made with mental reservation, in which the individual retains the right of interpreting the phrase, "best of his ability." But, though past facts are definite, the witness who testifies respecting them, does not swear that his testimony agrees with the facts, but with his conception of them; and this conception is liable to be affected by the imperfection of his memory, and even by prejudices, from which he cannot be sure that he is perfectly exempt. He testifies to the best of his knowledge and belief, and this phrase is as indefinite as the other. He who swears that he will give true testimony as to a fact concerning which he is about to be questioned, makes a promise of a future act; and although the past fact is definite, the future fulfilment of the promise is indefinite, and liable to be affected by the imperfection of the witness. The case does not differ essentially from that of oaths of office. In both, he who administers the oath, he who takes it, and all the parties concerned, are aware in

what respect the language used is indefinite; and, therefore, there is no need of mental reservation. A man who, without an oath, undertakes to tell what he knows concerning a past fact, or engages to perform the future duties of an office, which he receives, is bound to be sincere in making the promise, and faithful in executing it.

In the obligation to sincerity and faithfulness, the conscientious man recognises the authority of God, even without an oath; and the oath is his solemn and formal recognition of that authority. Without the oath, he realizes that a failure in sincerity and faithfulness deserves the displeasure of God; and the oath is his solemn and formal consent to act under God's moral government. Consciousness of imperfection may induce us, in everything, to serve the Lord with fear and trembling; but we have no right, on account of it, to refuse an acknowledgment of the presence, authority, and moral government of him to whom, whether willing or unwilling, we must give account.

OBJECTION 3.—For the prevention of every other crime, the laws rely on human penalties; and these penalties ought to suffice for the crime of bearing false witness.

Human penalties would be unavailing to prevent any species of crime, if there were no means of obtaining testimony against the criminal. Hence oaths are needful in trial for every crime; and their solemn reference to God's judgments is needed, to give efficacy to the penal threatenings with which the laws seek to prevent crime of every kind.

OBJECTION 4.—The testimony of persons who, from conscientious scruples, refuse to take oaths, is found to be as reliable as that of other persons; and therefore oaths are unnecessary.

Men of scrupulous consciences are not the persons from whom false testimony is to be feared. It cannot be inferred, from their case, that oaths are universally unnecessary. Had God judged them useless, he would not have required them under the Mosaic law. •

OBJECTION 5.—The frequency of oaths lessens their solemnity and effect, and produces irreverence towards God.

This may be a valid objection against the multiplication of oaths, but not against their lawfulness. Probably it would be better to dispense with oaths of office, when the inducements to unfaithfulness may be sufficiently counteracted by human penalties.



## CHAPTER XI.

### SOCIAL DUTIES IN GENERAL.

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THE Creator designed that man should live in society; this may be proved by the necessities and propensities of human nature, and by the teachings of revelation.

The *necessities* of human nature require society. If human beings lived in total separation from each other, the race could not be propagated, and the individuals would spend their days in wretchedness. They would be unable to contend with the beasts of the field, having neither instincts nor physical strength sufficient for the conflict. The arts of life would be unknown; and hence, men would be without clothing and habitation, to protect from cold and storm. Man's victory over the elements and the beasts of the field, is obtained by reason; but reason is too slowly developed to meet his necessities, if he entered on his course in solitude.

The *propensities* of human nature are averse to solitude. Solitary confinement is to man a terrible penalty. A few individuals of the race have chosen the hermit's life; but they have made the choice under the influence of motives which have overpowered the natural tendencies of their minds, and which have left them scarcely men. Were it possible for learning and the arts to be cultivated without society, and all man's physical wants supplied, there are impulses in his nature which would never be gratified, and undefined and inextinguishable longing would render him un-

happy. But suppose that he could escape all these, his highest happiness would still be, to a great extent, negative. To the joy of heart which proceeds from the exercise of social affections, he must for ever be a stranger; and hence, his highest pleasure would be a pitiable absence of all that renders human life desirable.

The volume of *revelation* begins its account of man, after his creation, with the divine declaration, "It is not good that the man should be alone."<sup>1</sup> And when God made known his will from Sinai, every precept in the second table of the law supposes man to be in a state of society. Everywhere throughout the Scriptures, man is regarded as a social being. It is not the will of God, as made known in the Bible, that men should forsake human society, and dwell in solitude; but pure and undefiled religion consists in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.<sup>2</sup>

In the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," the term "neighbor" signifies any fellow-man. When Christ was asked to explain it, he illustrated its meaning by the parable of the good Samaritan. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans; and, in explaining and applying the precept, did not hold themselves bound to love the Samaritans as neighbors. But the parable exhibited the benevolence of a Samaritan to a suffering Jew, and taught the Jews that their natural prejudices ought to be surmounted, and that their love ought to embrace even those who were accounted enemies. So interpreted, the precept binds us to love every individual of our race.

Love to individuals is expressed in various forms of

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> James i. 27.

external duty, according to their circumstances. The benevolent Samaritan rendered services to the Jew, which his suffering circumstances required, and which would have been impracticable, or worse than useless, in other circumstances. The duties which form the outward embodiment of love, are also modified by the various relations which individuals may sustain to us. Every individual of mankind is a neighbor to be loved; but, in the arrangements of society, peculiar relations arise, giving origin to peculiar obligations. No one ceases to be a neighbor; and the obligation to love every one as a neighbor does not cease; but, instead of unvarying benevolence to every human being, we have, according to the relations which spring up in society, the modifications of love corresponding to these relations—such as conjugal love, parental love, &c. And the outward forms of duty, in which these various modifications of love are expressed, vary according to the several relations, and become what are denominated *social duties*.

Some social relations are of divine appointment. The relations between husband and wife, between parent and child, are of this sort; and we may add the relations which members of Christian churches bear to each other, and also those of citizens to each other, and to the government under which they live. The two chapters which follow next in order, will discuss the duties of these relations, except those appertaining to the church, which properly belong to the department of Theology.

#### SIMPLE SOCIETY.

THE simplest form of society is that in which individuals voluntarily unite for the accomplishment of some specified object. It frequently happens that some

good, which individual effort could not obtain, may be attained by the united co-operation of many ; and, for the attainment of this end, they voluntarily engage to co-operate with each other. Besides the general obligation to each other, as neighbors, they enter into new obligations by their mutual contract ; and these new obligations are to be ascertained by the terms of the contract. The persons so united, form a voluntary society ; and the engagement which they enter into is the *constitution* of the society.

Membership in a voluntary society must, of course, originate in the consent of the individuals who compose it ; but it does not follow that the members may leave the society at their pleasure. If the object of the association is unlawful, any member may abandon it at any time, on the ground that a promise to do wrong is not obligatory. But if the object is lawful, the members are bound by their contract with each other, and cannot leave the society contrary to this contract, without the consent of the other members. A failure to perform their duty to the society binds them to make amends, just as a failure to fulfil any other contract.

The members of a voluntary society may, or may not, enter into association with each other on terms of equality. The consent of each is alike necessary ; but this consent may assign to one individual a higher place, and a larger influence, than to another. This inequality, if established in the constitution or original compact, cannot afterwards become a just ground of separation from the society, so long as those who hold the higher place of influence conform to the constitution.

When individuals enter into society on terms of equality, the action of the body is naturally determined by the will of the majority, unless the constitution provides otherwise. But the object of the association

cannot be changed, except by the unanimous vote of the members. To change the object is, in fact, to dissolve the old body, and form a new one; and no person can be required to enter into the new association without his consent. If a majority decide to change the object of the society, they constitute a new society, and leave those who do not consent to the change to prosecute, if they choose, the object of the original association. On this ground, property acquired by a society cannot be applied, at the will of the majority, to a purpose not contemplated in the original compact, but belongs to those who adhere to the constitution.

## CHAPTER XII.

### FAMILY DUTIES.

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#### SECTION I. MARRIAGE.

MARRIAGE is an institution of the Creator, who thought it not good for man to be alone, and created woman a help-meet for him. Adam and Eve were formed to be husband and wife; and, as joined together in this relation, were commanded to increase, and multiply, and replenish the earth. Beasts of the field propagate their species without marriage; but, in various species of birds, the flocks divide into pairs in the spring season, to build nests, and rear their several broods of young. This instinct of birds shows the Creator's will respecting them; and the proof is abundant, that God designed the human race to be propagated by means of marriage. We may see in the affection which a feathered pair exhibit for each other, and in the joint care which they exercise over their young, advantages which human beings, if guided by reason only, ought to secure to themselves; and these advantages the benevolent Creator has designed for man in the matrimonial institution.

The affection which ought to subsist between husband and wife, is adapted to be one of the chief sources of human happiness. The married pair separate from all the world beside, and give themselves to each other in

the closest of human relations. The man leaves father and mother, to cleave to his wife; and the tender female, in like manner, leaves the home of her childhood, and the protection of affectionate parents, to cleave to her husband. The new relation requires the parties to become "one flesh," and to love each other as their own bodies. Strong affection between them is necessary to attain the ends of the matrimonial institution; and where it exists, it opens a perennial source of joy. The sunshine of life gives double happiness, because they enjoy it together; and, when dark days come, they support and cheer each other. If united in Christian faith, as well as in conjugal love, the tie death itself cannot sever. As helpers of each other's faith and joy, they walk together in the way of the Lord; and, as heirs together of the grace of life in Christ Jesus, they rejoice in the common hope of the heavenly inheritance, and of dwelling for ever in one eternal happy home.

The benefits of marriage are not confined to those who are at the head of the family. The children are shut up by it under the joint protection of their parents, and blessed with their united care. If piety and love regulate the household, the children are trained in the ways of virtue and religion, and are taught how to enrich themselves with wealth of character, and treasure laid up in heaven. Children born out of wedlock are usually thrown on the care of the mother, the weaker parent; and hence they have less than half of the means which legitimate children enjoy for support and education. They witness none of the sacred affection and tender sympathy which subsist between parents lawfully united in the conjugal relation; and they have few inducements to obey the command, "Honor thy father and mother." Such unfortunates enter on life

under many disadvantages; yet, if surrounded by a society generally virtuous, they may have sufficient intercourse with well-regulated families to guard their morals. But if marriage were universally abolished, all the human race would be born in these sad circumstances. All would be without a well-regulated home for their childhood, and without the influence and example of well-regulated families in the vicinity. Brought into the world like the beasts of the field, they would be given up to animal appetites and passions, without the training necessary to develop and cultivate the moral powers.

Another advantage of marriage consists in the provision which it makes for aged and infirm parents. Children who have been taught to honor their father and mother, take pleasure in sustaining them when old age comes, and in rendering their declining days happy. But were matrimony unknown, not only would helpless infants be left to perish for want of parental care, but aged and helpless parents would also be left to perish for want of filial affection and maintenance.

Civil government was at first patriarchal; and, having derived its origin from family government, it is still indebted to family government for its most efficient support. When children have been taught to obey their parents, they are prepared to obey civil rulers; and virtue and order must prevail in a state which is composed of well-regulated families. But if family organizations were destroyed, the fences of morality would be broken down, and vice would overrun the community, spreading everywhere misery and desolation.

Marriage, by producing family government, is an important means of preserving and perpetuating religion in the world. A well-regulated family is a garden enclosed, in which the young plants of piety may be



nurtured. Here we find the examples of religious education, by which men are trained to moral greatness, and prepared to adorn, elevate, and bless the human race, and glorify God. Were marriage banished from the earth, religious education would cease; and human beings, herding together like the beasts, would be given up to beastly vices. If the natural tendencies of things were not counteracted by some divine interposition, the knowledge of God and the practice of virtue would soon become extinct in the world.

As God's appointed means of propagating the human race, as his first institution for the benefit of the race, and as the source of many inestimable blessings, indispensable to the existence and happiness of society, marriage deserves to be honored by all; and its sanctity to be guarded from every encroachment. To incorrect views respecting the importance of this divine institution, and a want of reverence for it, much of the vice may be traced, that now degrades mankind, curses human society, and brings down the wrath of heaven, as formerly on sinful Sodom.

### *Chastity.*

Marriage is a union of one man and one woman for life. It requires the full consent of the parties; and this consent ought to be intelligently expressed, according to the laws and usages at the time and place of forming the union. Every union of like kind, which is not formed for life, and with due nuptial formality, is a violation of the marriage law. Such violation may proceed from a contempt for marriage in both parties, and a determination to be free from its restraints. Where open contempt for marriage is not avowed, the parties transgressing must fail to possess due reverence for the sacred institution, and for him who ordained it.

In such reverence true chastity consists. It contemplates the creation of man, male and female, as a divine arrangement, having reference to the matrimonial relation; and in every act, word, and thought, it exhibits profound reverence for this divine arrangement, and unwillingness to contravene it. If such reverence for God and his sacred and benevolent institution fills the mind, no unchaste passion can stir, no unchaste imagination can rove abroad.

Of the virtue which we are contemplating, we expect to find, and we do find, the best specimens in the softer sex. Modesty is essential to female loveliness. Any indecent behavior is sufficient to degrade a female from the high place which she ought to occupy in society; but, in order to her true loveliness, something more is necessary than mere abstinence from gross acts of impropriety. Her tongue must be unpractised in the utterance, and her ear untainted with the sound of indelicate allusions; and her imagination should be as pure as the new-fallen snow. Whether such purity can be preserved by those who frequent theatres, or read the current novels of the day, and the writings of such poets as Byron and Moore, I leave for others to decide. There may be daughters, there may be mothers, who think so perfect purity unnecessary in the character of woman; but what mother, who desires her daughter to be happily united in wedlock with a virtuous man, would wish it known that the young beauty is indelicate in conversation, or that she has a polluted imagination? But if men were willing to tolerate mental familiarity with crime in the fair sex, so long as gross acts of transgression are avoided, it ought to be remembered that there is a God who searches the heart, and who will bring into judgment whatever is offensive to his holiness.

The virtue of chastity is not required of females

only. In the judgment of mankind, it may be more obligatory on females, but not in the judgment of God. In the present life, a heavier penalty for violation falls on woman ; but there is no reason to expect a heavier penalty in the life to come. On the contrary, since the retributions of the future world will perfect the moral government of God, by supplying defects in its present administration, it may be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for women than for men, who violate the law of chastity. Let no young man consent to be less pure, than he desires her to be, whom he is willing to take to his bosom, the wife of his choice, the loved, admired, and trusted associate of his future years.

To estimate rightly the virtue of chastity, we must contemplate the tendency of marriage to promote the well-being of mankind. Every failure in the virtue, is an attack on the matrimonial institution, and needs nothing but universal prevalence in order to banish the institution from the world. It cannot be a light crime, however carelessly or presumptuously it may be committed, which pollutes the very fountain of human existence, and makes sport of God's command for peopling the world with immortal beings. Let every man who loves the happiness of his race, and fears the judgments of God, keep himself pure. God's will on this subject is clearly made known in the Holy Scriptures ; and his awful judgments therein revealed, are sufficient to fill the minds of transgressors with terror ; and as the beginning of his divine retribution, loathsome disease and rottenness of bones are, in many cases, the present reward of transgression.

### *Polygamy.*

Marriage, as originally instituted, was the union of one man and one woman ; but polygamy, or the taking

of several wives, has prevailed in many countries. The first example on record, occurred among the descendants of Cain.<sup>1</sup> It did not exist in the family of Noah, and perhaps in none of the virtuous families before the flood; but, in after ages, some of the best men whose history is given in the Bible, had more wives than one. The practice, though opposed to the general teachings of the Old Testament, was tolerated by the Mosaic law; but the precepts of Christ forbid it, and restore the institution to its original form.

Some interpreters of Scripture suppose that the law of Moses prohibited polygamy, in the words, "Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister."<sup>2</sup> They translate these words, "Thou shalt not take one wife to another;" but sound criticism rejects this translation. The Hebrew phrase here used, is literally, *a woman to her sister*. It sometimes has a sort of pronominal use, as a distributive of an expressed antecedent in the feminine gender, when this antecedent denotes inanimate objects. In such cases, the presence of the antecedent word guards the phrase from being construed literally; but no such guard exists in the passage under consideration, and the laws of interpretation require the word *sister* to be taken literally, as it must be everywhere else in the context. The rendering, which is given in the text of the common English version, expresses the true sense of the original, and does not prohibit polygamy. Other passages in the Mosaic code show that polygamy was tolerated.<sup>3</sup>

The evil effects of polygamy were felt in the family of the patriarch Jacob, whose wives were not equally beloved, and had the happiness of their intercourse with each other disturbed by jealousy. In the family of

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xviii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. xxi. 15.

David the injury done by Amnon to the sister of Absalom, and the vengeance taken by the latter, exemplify the evil tendency of polygamy on the children.

The welfare of children requires the undivided counsel and care of parents who are "one flesh." The nearly equal number of the two sexes, as born into the world, indicates the will of the Creator that every man should have but one wife and every woman but one husband. This arrangement, moreover, multiplies the race more rapidly and provides better for the support of the family. By such considerations as these, natural religion teaches that polygamy is opposed to the will of God.

Although the law of Moses tolerated polygamy, the first book of that inspired writer furnishes proof that the Creator designed each man to have but one wife. The union of Adam to his one wife was the first example of marriage; and, in imitation of this example, it is said, "a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife," not his wives; and it is added, "they shall be one flesh."<sup>1</sup> Several wives could not be united to one another, and to one husband, so as to constitute "one flesh," in the sense of this declaration. As the first book of the Old Testament gives proof that polygamy is not according to the will of God; so also does the last. Malachi represents the taking of another wife as treachery to the first, and a violation of the marriage covenant. He refers to the original institution of marriage, and explains that only one wife was created for Adam; not because the creating power was exhausted, but because union with but one wife better secures the religious training of the children.<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament we have the teachings of Christ on the subject. Quoting the passage above

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. ii. 15.

cited from Genesis, he said, "and they *twain* shall be one flesh;"<sup>1</sup> limiting the number expressly to two; and he explained the obligation of the parties in marriage according to the original design of the institution. In harmony with the teaching of Christ, Paul says, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."<sup>2</sup>

So wide a deviation from the original institution, as that one woman should have several husbands, has seldom been tolerated by the moral sentiments of any people. The Mosaic law accounted this adultery, and punished the criminal parties with death. If one man has several wives, though his affections may be unequally divided among the children, he can claim them all as his, and extend to them all paternal care. But if a woman had several husbands, no one of them could claim the children as his, or feel toward them the obligation of a father. The law of Christ equally prohibits the union of one man to more than one wife, and accounts it adultery, even when the first wife has been divorced, if not for just cause.

### *Divorce.*

The marriage covenant makes the husband and wife "one flesh." An intimacy is created, to which no third party can be admitted, without violation of the covenant; and such violation, according to the doctrine of Christ, is the only sufficient ground of divorce. The law of Moses allowed divorce for other causes, but Christ explained that this was not according to the original institution.<sup>3</sup>

The civil laws frequently grant divorce in violation of the divine rule. Various causes may justify the

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xix. 8.

allowance of a separation from bed and board, and the making of legal provision for the appropriation of the property, and the maintenance of the children; but human laws have no right to dissolve the marriage covenant, and permit the parties to marry again, except in the case for which Christ has allowed divorce. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The covenant can be annulled by nothing but death, or the criminal violation of it by one of the parties. In either of these cases, the remaining party is free from obligation. Some have understood Paul, in 1 Cor. vii. 15, to teach that a deserted husband or wife is free from the matrimonial obligation, and at liberty to marry again. But his language implies nothing more than that the deserted party is not bound to follow the deserter, and continue the performance of conjugal duties. Since Christ did not allow the privilege of marrying again to an unlawfully divorced party, it cannot be that Paul allowed it to one merely deserted.

It is important to matrimonial happiness, that the parties should understand the conjugal relation to be formed for life. This tends to make them one in feeling and interest, and presents a strong inducement to bear with each other's infirmities, and accommodate themselves to the necessities of their condition. When divorce is obtainable for trifling causes, a sense of insecurity is easily engendered, incompatible with the perfect confidence which the married pair should repose in each other.

### *Incest.*

Marriage with near relatives is called *incest*, and is prohibited by the law of God. Paul speaks of it as a crime not named even among the Gentiles, "That one

should have his father's wife."<sup>1</sup> It appears from this, that men who were guided by the mere light of nature, reprobated this connection as inadmissible, because of the relationship between the parties. The unavoidable intimacy into which near relatives are thrown, renders it desirable for the preservation of their purity, that a thought of intermarriage should not enter their minds. The law of incest invests their persons with a species of sanctity; and, by marking out boundaries within which conjugal affection is not permitted to enter, reserves an appropriate sphere for the exercise of the other domestic affections. It has been said that races of animals are improved by an intermixture of breeds; and some have maintained, that marriage with near relatives tends to produce mental imbecility in the offspring.

The New Testament contains no express precept against incest. Natural religion is incapable of determining the degrees of relationship within which marriage ought not to be allowed. We need the wisdom of the Creator to determine the proper boundary for us; and his wisdom did determine for the people of Israel, and gave the law recorded in the Old Testament. A regulation peculiar to the Hebrews made it necessary, for the preservation of their family inheritances, that a brother should take the wife of a deceased brother who had died childless; but the general law of incest, given to that people, is applicable to human society everywhere, because the same relations subsist everywhere. Paul referred to the Old Testament, when he said, "All Scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness;"<sup>2</sup> and the Old Testament law of incest must be our rule of righteousness, in the absence of any rule on the subject in the clearer revelation of the New Testament.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.



A man is forbidden to marry any one that is "near of kin to him;"<sup>1</sup> that is, according to the proper import of the Hebrew phrase so translated, any near blood-relative. The degrees prohibited are; 1. The perpendicular line of ascent and descent, which includes father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter. 2. The next parallel line, which includes the brothers and sisters of those in the former line. The widow of a blood-relative is reckoned in the place of her deceased husband; and, if he stood within the prohibited degree, marriage with her is prohibited, just as if she were herself a blood-relative of that degree.<sup>2</sup>

By a distinct prohibition, the female ancestors and descendants of a deceased wife, are included among those with whom marriage is unlawful.<sup>3</sup>

Marriage with a deceased wife's sister, though not to be advised, is not prohibited. A man was forbidden to take a wife to her sister to vex her in her lifetime, after the example of Jacob, who married two sisters; but the limitation *in her lifetime*, implies that it would be lawful after her death. A man is forbidden to marry the widow of a deceased brother, because she stands to him as a blood-relative; but the sister of a deceased wife is not reckoned as a blood-relative. It may be objected, that an unmarried woman ought to reckon the husband of her deceased sister in the place of that sister, that is, as a brother; but this does not appear to be the Scripture mode of computation. The two cases differ from each other, in the same way that to have several husbands differed from polygamy.

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. xviii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xviii. 7-16.

<sup>3</sup> Lev. xviii. 17.

## SECTION II. DUTIES OF HUSBANDS.

I. HUSBANDS are under obligation to love their wives.

Love is the moral bond of society, and is declared by an inspired writer to be the fulfilling of the law. The various relations in human society give occasion for various forms of duty; but of every duty, love is the soul, without which the outward form is lifeless. Cold civilities may pass for duties, among persons who have little intercourse with each other, and in whom profession may be taken for reality; but the intimacy of the conjugal relation gives opportunity to test the sincerity of professions, and detect the empty formality of service which proceeds not from the heart. Hence, love is, in the highest degree, essential to the duties of the conjugal state; and without it every attention, however officious, has the offensiveness of a lifeless corpse.

Love seeks the happiness of the object beloved. Persons united in conjugal love, find their highest pleasure in promoting the happiness of each other. If a burden is to be borne, each seeks to bear it, to the relief of the other; and if some good is to be enjoyed, each seeks to secure it for the other. Earthly bliss loses its charm, if they cannot enjoy it together; and the hope of heaven is rendered more delightful, if attended with the confident expectation of being companions in glory through eternal ages.

The duty of husbands to love their wives, is enjoined in such passages of Scripture as the following: "So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies."<sup>1</sup> "Let every one of you love his wife even

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 28.

as himself.”<sup>1</sup> “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”<sup>2</sup>

II. Husbands are under obligation to be faithful to their wives.

The marriage covenant binds the parties to each other, by vows which have the importance and solemnity of an oath. Adultery is a gross violation of this covenant, a base and detestable offence against the other party in the covenant, against social happiness, against truth, and against God. This crime inflicts a death-blow on domestic happiness. In general, it would be far better for the family if the guilty party had died. The surviving parent and the children might then have borne their loss without a sense of degradation, and could have honored the memory of the lost one; but the crime which breaks the marriage bond, makes the children orphans disgraced, and fills the family with bitterest misery. The prevalence of this crime, because of the connection of family government with the general welfare of society, tends to loosen the bonds of civil government, and overthrow all law and order; and, because of the connection of family discipline with religion, it tends to banish religion from the world, and bring down on mankind the heaviest judgments of heaven. Some of the most fearful denunciations contained in the Bible, are against this crime.

Conjugal fidelity requires the continued manifestation of conjugal love. All the tender offices to which love prompts, should be performed with unwearied perseverance; not from constraint, but from a full heart. The married pair, in their intercourse with other persons, should never give to each other occasion for the suspicion, that their mutual affection can be disturbed

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 19.

by even a momentary preference for a third party. The husband violates this obligation, when he habitually roams abroad for society; and, instead of cleaving to his wife, exhibits more pleasure in the company of others.

III. Husbands are under obligation to support and protect their wives.

The maintenance of the family devolves chiefly on the husband. He has superior strength for labor, is better fitted for intercourse with the world, and is exempt from many burdens which necessarily fall on the mother of his children. It is unfeeling in him to add to these burdens, by requiring her to labor for the maintenance of the family. She leans on his strong arm for support, and it is his duty to cherish her as the weaker vessel. It should be his pleasure to protect her from the calamities of life, and the rude assaults of the world; and in this service he should be willing to exhaust his energies, and, if necessary, sacrifice his life.

IV. Husbands are under obligation to assist their wives.

The wife has her proper duties, in the performance of which she needs the sympathy and aid of her husband. It is in his power to lighten her burdens, and cheer her in her toils. When sickness has rendered her unable to bear the care of the house, he should supply the lack of service to the best of his ability; and his cheerful efforts should give her assurance that, if she should be removed by death, she might safely trust her motherless children to his redoubled care.

#### SECTION III. DUTIES OF WIVES.

I. WIVES are under obligation to love their husbands.

II. Wives are under obligation to be faithful to their husbands.

The obligation of the wife to love and fidelity is the same as that of the husband, which was considered in the last section.

III. Wives are under obligation to submit to their husbands.

If the husband loves his wife, as his duty requires, he cannot act in disregard of her wishes, or extort from her a reluctant service. Conjugal love will seldom fail to produce unanimity; and will leave, in general, as little room for the exercise of authority, as for the coercion of physical strength. But when, after affectionate consultation, they fail to attain unity of judgment, the Creator has constituted the husband the head of the family, and lodged with him the responsibility of acting. In this case, it is made the duty of the wife to yield; and she exhibits, in cheerful submission, a lovely greatness which she could never attain by the exercise of authority. She may be conscious that her mental endowments are not inferior, and confident that her judgment is right, while she, in obedience to God, honors the official superiority of her husband.

IV. Wives are under obligation to assist their husbands.

The wife has her appointed sphere of action in guiding the house; and, by faithful performance of her duty, assists the husband, on whom the chief care of the family devolves. When he has, by industry, provided for the maintenance of the family, she will, by economy, use what he has provided to the best possible advantage. When he has toiled abroad during the day, she will welcome his return at evening, and make his home and fireside happy. And when sickness prostrates him, or death removes him, she will assume his

duties with unwonted energy, and become both father and mother to the children of their love.

#### SECTION IV. DUTIES OF PARENTS.

~ I. IT is the duty of parents to protect their children, and provide for them suitable maintenance.

Nature teaches the obligation of parents to take care of their children. Under the guidance of instinct, irrational creatures take care of their young. A like instinct binds the mother to take care of her infant, which comes into the world the most helpless of beings. Few mothers are so destitute of natural affection as to leave their offspring to perish. The Scriptures illustrate God's care of his people, by the affectionate solicitude of a mother for her child: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."<sup>1</sup> The parental instinct of the father, though less strong than that of the mother, is used in the Bible for the same purpose: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."<sup>2</sup> The instincts which the Author of nature has implanted in the breasts of both parents, and which are noticed in the Bible with so high commendation, point out clearly their duty to render all needful care to their children. The wisdom of the Creator has made the strength of parental instinct correspond with the absoluteness of the dependence with which their children hang on them for life, and all that renders life desirable. So strong is their claim, that the parent who can resist it is worse than a brute, and sins against nature, against reason, and against God.

The first cries of the infant call for such offices of

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<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. ciii. 13.

kindness as are needful to preserve its existence, and protect it from suffering. These wants the parents are under obligation to supply. As time advances, new wants arise, creating new demands on parental care. Until children attain sufficient age to provide for themselves, parents are bound to spread over them the shield of their protection, and provide for them food, raiment, and habitation.

The style of maintenance which parents are bound to provide for their children, should be accommodated to their future prospects. We scorn the miser, who, for the sake of hoarding up wealth, denies himself the comforts of life; and equally worthy of scorn is the parent, who, for the sake of enriching his children hereafter, denies them present comforts, or accustoms them to rough and scanty fare. But a more common and more injurious fault of parents, is, to accustom their children to too high a style of living for their prospects. Young persons who have been accustomed to every indulgence, are ill qualified to enter on life in poverty. They are not fitted to bear with contentment the hardships to which they are necessarily exposed, and to put forth the energies which their circumstances demand. They are hence subjected to temptations, which frequently prove too strong for their moral principles; and their lives, begun in affluence and indulgence, terminate in poverty and ruin.

II. It is the duty of parents to provide for the education of their children.

A proper *physical* education is necessary to preserve health, and give vigor to both body and mind. Great injury is done, when children are put to employments in which their strength is overtasked, or necessary time for rest and relaxation is not allowed, or they are compelled to labor in unwholesome rooms. Health often

suffers by undue confinement to study. Many young persons, in their efforts to obtain improvement of mind, exhaust their health, and disqualify themselves for the duties and enjoyments of life. Parents ought so to direct the education of their children, as to guard against this evil. But if health ought not to be sacrificed to mental improvement, much less ought it to be sacrificed to the follies and fashions of the world. The mother fails sadly in duty, who permits her daughter's health to be impaired, by conforming to unwise fashions of dress; or by injudicious exposure in attendance on fashionable amusements. A few hours of gaiety and splendor, are bought too dear, if they cost a life of disease, or a premature death.

The future usefulness and happiness of children depend much on their *intellectual* education. Without mental improvement it is impossible for them to attain an elevated position in society, or exert an extensive beneficial influence; and their enjoyments must be less refined and exquisite. To prosecute any business of life with success, knowledge is necessary; and often the mental discipline acquired in the pursuit of knowledge, is even more advantageous than the knowledge itself.

The education of children should be adapted to the business which they are expected to pursue. For the learned professions a more thorough education is necessary; but well-cultivated minds are greatly desirable, even in those who cultivate the ground, or work at trades. Such a mind may dignify and adorn an humble employment, and may, from a low position, diffuse a beneficial influence that will be a rich and lasting blessing to society.

The interests of children for time and eternity, depend greatly on their *moral* education. To this the care and efforts of parents should be incessantly directed.



To this they should have regard in the selection of a teacher ; but the chief labor and responsibility cannot be delegated to another. Parents should have regard to this most important duty, in all the intercourse with their children, and should labor, by the united influence of precept and example, to train them in the right way. They should set before them the authority of God, and the retributions of eternity ; and should apply to their opening minds the truths of religion, and the motives to virtue and piety. They should watch the first bud-dings of unholy propensities and passions, and repress them by the most effectual means that a wisely-directed parental affection can apply. The rod of correction is an important instrument of discipline, if judiciously used ; for Solomon has instructed us, " He that spareth his rod hateth his son." <sup>1</sup> But that parent little under-stands his duty who relies chiefly on the rod to effect the virtuous education of his children. If other methods of reaching the heart and conscience are judiciously employed, the rod will seldom be needed.

The virtue of children depends much on the company they keep. If permitted to associate with the vicious, they will be likely to become vicious. A few lessons in vice from their playmates, will be sufficient to counter-act a long continued course of instruction in virtue. Parents who select the society of their children, may give offence to opulent and influential neighbors ; but it is far better to offend them, than to ruin the children. Association with persons of polished manners, cultivated taste, and superior intelligence, is very desirable, if not injurious to the moral character ; but all its ad-vantages will not compensate for the loss of virtue.

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xiii. 24.

III. It is the duty of parents to assist their children in entering on the business of life.

The choice of a business for life, and the preparations for entering on it, are usually made while the child is under parental control—but after he has attained to sufficient age for his predilections to be consulted. In early childhood children should be governed with absolute authority; but at maturity, which is, according to our laws, at the age of twenty-one, the child passes from under the authority of the parents, and becomes an independent man. As he approaches this period, he becomes more and more capable of self-government, and ought to become accustomed to it. For this reason, parental discipline, if wisely conducted, will undergo a gradual change, as the age of the child advances; and will, as he approaches maturity, be exercised more by counsel, and less by authority. This course is especially necessary with respect to the business of life to be pursued after he has left parental authority. When it has been decided on, parents should, according to their means, aid the child in preparing for it, and commencing the prosecution of it.

Wealthy parents fail in duty to their children, if they permit them to rely on the inheritance which they have in prospect, and arrive at maturity, unprepared for any useful employment, and with no other habits than those of idleness and prodigality. Poor parents, by judicious counsel to their children, and such aid as rigid economy may enable them to render, have it in their power to smooth the entrance on life's rugged toils. By inspiring their children with hope, and stimulating them to effort, they may render advantages of far greater value than an outset of pecuniary capital.

IV. Parental duties require careful study, patient

labor, habitual regard to the welfare of the children, and constant dependence on God.

As he who enters on any business, ought to qualify himself for it, so he who assumes parental obligations, ought to qualify himself for discharging them with success. It is a wise arrangement of Providence, that persons do not become parents until they have attained such age as gives hope that parental duties may be well performed; but maturity of age is not the only qualification which is needed. The care of an immortal being is more important than the care of dollars and cents, and requires a larger amount of diligent study. The training of an infant man, until his powers are developed, and he becomes a wise, virtuous, and useful member of society, is an art worthy to be studied; and the obligation to study it, devolves on every parent to whom Providence has committed the care of an infant; and the study needs to be continued till the child reaches maturity. Few parents are able to review their conduct in the discipline of their children, without self-reproach for many failures in judgment; and hence, continued study is necessary, that the duty may be performed more wisely.

Much failure in parental duty arises from mere neglect. The father is occupied with the business of his profession or trade, and the mother is encumbered with many household cares. Neither of them has time for the training of the children; and the duty is hence neglected. But, in truth, the time devoted to other employments is first due to the children; and the parents should have no time for anything else, until this more important duty has been performed. Nor must they grow weary. If past efforts have been successful, the objects of their care are not yet beyond the reach of danger; and past success should stimulate to continued

diligence. But if past efforts have been unsuccessful, the need is greater for redoubled energy. The causes of failure should be investigated; and no labor should be spared, until the end has been accomplished.

Parental duty is self-denying. The father and mother who regard their babe as a plaything, and in all their treatment of it seek only their own amusement or gratification, have no proper sense of parental obligation. They should forget their own pleasure, in contemplating the interests of the child; or rather, they should have no other pleasure than in promoting these interests. Forgetting themselves, the hearts of parents should be bound up in the welfare of their children. If they indulge parental partiality for one child above another, they seek to please themselves, at the expense of jealousy and discord among the children. Nothing should be done, nothing should be permitted, that can weaken the bond of brotherly love, or impair their sense of moral obligation.

The hearts of children are depraved, and parental discipline cannot renew them. To effect this change, the power of the Holy Spirit is needed; and for the power of the Holy Spirit to accompany their efforts, and render them effectual, parents ought always to pray. If to the diligent and persevering performance of duty, fervent and incessant prayer be added, they have just reason to expect that God will, in fulfilment of his promise, pour out his spirit on their seed, and his blessing on their offspring.

#### SECTION V. DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

I. It is the duty of children to love and reverence their parents.

Although the instinctive love of parents for their children, is stronger than that of children for their

parents, yet the latter is a strong impulse of human nature, when not counteracted by vicious passions. Whatever outflowing affection proceeds from the mind of an infant, the mother, by whom it is nursed, becomes the first proper object of it; and as reason unfolds, and the nature of the parental relation begins to be in part apprehended, the filial affections are brought into more perceptible exercise, and the father receives his share.

A sense of dependence and inferiority mingles with the exercise of filial love, converting it into reverence. To the child, the parents, however humble their condition of life, are great, and towards them he first exercises reverential submission. This filial respect, in its highest degree, the God of heaven claims of all mankind as his offspring. "If then I be a father, where is mine honor?"<sup>1</sup> "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits?"<sup>2</sup> From the language of these texts, we may learn the nature of the respect due from children to their parents; and the importance of the duty may be inferred from the fact, that it is made the subject of a special command in the decalogue, and the only command to which a promise is affixed. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."<sup>3</sup>

Filial piety should be continued and cherished throughout life. It is beautiful and fragrant as the flowers of spring, when it flows from youthful hearts towards parents in the vigor of life; but it resembles the ripened fruits of autumn, and possesses its highest value, when it is exercised by children of mature years

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<sup>1</sup> Mal. i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. xx. 12.

towards parents bending under the weight of age, and oppressed with infirmities. Such filial piety appeared so lovely to the view of the heathen poet Virgil, that he made it the chief ornament in the character of his hero Æneas.

II. It is the duty of children to obey their parents.

The obligation of the parents to train their children aright, requires the right to command; and this implies the obligation of the children to obey. The inestimable benefits of well-regulated family discipline depend on the obedience of children, and would be lost to mankind if the obligation to filial obedience were annihilated. Anarchy, nourished at the domestic hearth, would come forth in strength from the door of every habitation, to desolate society, and fill the world with crime and misery.

The duty of children to obey their parents is expressly and frequently enjoined in the Holy Scriptures.

The authority of parents is subordinate to the authority of God. Hence, if parents command what God forbids, their command is not obligatory. This limitation of parental authority is implied in the precept, "Obey your parents *in the Lord*."<sup>1</sup> But a conscientious rejection of parental authority requires more knowledge of duty to God than young children possess. As children approach to maturity, parental commands should become counsels, in cases which affect the conscience; and children should respect the counsels of parents, if not inconsistent with their duty to God. Though the authority of God may, in some possible case, require a child to disobey his parents, it requires still that he should love and reverence them in the very act of disobeying; and a proper exhibition of filial re-

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 1.

spect, in such trying circumstances, will accomplish much towards correcting the erroneous judgment of the parents. The obligation of children to obey their parents ceases at maturity, the time of which our laws have fixed at the age of twenty-one years. If they remain after this age, in a state of dependence on their parents, the obligation to obey continues. A dutiful child, even at mature age, and in independent circumstances, will respect the counsel and wishes of his parents, and will avoid, as far as possible, whatever may give them pain.

III. It is the duty of children, if necessary, to maintain their parents, if rendered helpless by sickness or age.

This obligation is a natural and spontaneous dictate of filial affection. Children are without natural affection if they permit their aged and infirm parents to suffer, and do not exert their best efforts to relieve them. Such efforts are but the return which mere justice requires, for the care and support received in infancy. Parental care and toil bestowed on children through years of helplessness, are ill requited by subsequent filial neglect, which adds anguish to sufferings that call for sympathy and relief; and such neglect deserves and provokes the wrath of Heaven.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### PUBLIC DUTIES.

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#### SECTION I. PUBLIC SPIRIT.

PUBLIC spirit is a disposition to promote the welfare of the community. The tendency of human depravity is for every one to seek his own, and not another's welfare; but, in opposition to this tendency, the divine precept requires men to love their neighbors as themselves. He who obeys this precept, seeks the general good of the community in which he dwells. Instead of being absorbed in his private affairs, and wholly intent on the advancement of his own interests, or those of his own family, he looks abroad into society, and strives to promote the well-being of all to whom his efforts can reach. This is the man of public spirit.

A man of public spirit will be inclined to invite the co-operation of others, both that they may be well employed, and that his philanthropic designs may be the more successfully prosecuted. Hence, he is inclined to promote voluntary associations for benevolent purposes; to assist in the establishment of schools and charitable institutions; to devise and adopt measures for improving public morals, and extending the benign influence of religion. This man readily takes his place in every form of society which aims at the general good.



## SECTION II. PROFESSIONAL DUTIES.

EVERY man is under obligation to do good to the community in which he lives. Every merchant, every mechanic, every cultivator of the soil, is bound to pursue his business with a view to the public good, and not merely for personal profit. He is a public servant, and the duties of his calling are, to some extent, public duties; but there is a special propriety in so regarding the duties of those who follow the learned professions. The men who serve the public by selling goods, building houses, or raising wheat, perform work of which men generally are competent judges; and therefore no high degree of trust is reposed in them. But the case is different with men of the learned professions. The services which they propose to render to mankind, relate to interests of great importance; and for the proper performance of them, knowledge and fidelity are needed which few men are capable of duly estimating. Hence they who offer their services in these professions, ask the public confidence, and bind themselves to the public under obligations which they ought carefully to study.

*Preacher.*

Men who devote themselves to the ministry of the gospel, claim to be distinguished from the rest of mankind, by a special call from Heaven, requiring them to perform the holy service. They are therefore bound to obey God in all things. Whether the world praise or blame, smile or frown, bless or persecute, their duty is so to fulfil the ministry which God has committed to them, as to secure his approbation.

The ministry of the gospel aims to promote the spiritual and eternal interests of mankind. The tradesman

is criminal, who pursues his business without regard to the public good ; but far more criminal is he, who ministers in holy things, not to save the souls of men, but to secure to himself worldly gain or popular applause. Such a man dishonors the service of God, and deserves the malediction of the Almighty. In the gospel ministry, as in every other service, the laborer is worthy of his hire. Every minister is justified in receiving a maintenance from those to whom he ministers ; and they are bound to give it ; but if this is the end for which he labors, he prostitutes his holy calling, and stains his garments with the blood of immortal souls.

He who preaches the gospel, ought to understand well the message which he is to deliver from God to men. The highest attainments in learning may be made subservient to the ministry of the word ; but no attainments, without a knowledge of Bible truth, can render a man wise to win souls. And the knowledge of divine truth must not be theoretical merely. It must dwell in the heart with sanctifying power, and move the soul to reverence for the authority of God, delight in obeying him, and zealous consecration to his service.

When the heart is under the sanctifying power of divine truth, a necessary effect will be holiness of external conduct ; and without this a minister of the gospel may not hope to succeed in his work. However pure may be the doctrine which he preaches, an unholy life will nullify its power. Who will believe what the preacher says, when his life shows that he himself does not believe it ? Who will be excited to flee from danger, when he who sounds the alarm, makes no effort to escape ? The man who desires to save souls, must not only urge them to flee from the wrath to come, but must lead their flight ; and, by example as well as precept, direct their steps in the way of holiness and eternal

life. Of every virtue, the minister of the gospel ought to exhibit an illustrious example.

The ministry of the gospel requires untiring energy. How incessant were the toils of Christ! Day after day he preached to crowds that pressed on him to hear the word; and, when night gave rest to others, he often retired to some lonely place for prayer. His example shames lazy ministers, and demonstrates their unfitness for the sacred office. Paul labored abundantly in his holy calling, and left an example which ministers of Christ cannot imitate, without employing all their energies to save men, and spread the triumphs of the gospel. A minister must not wait for opportunities of doing good to present themselves—but must seek them. He must watch for souls, and strive by every means in his power to rescue them from sin and danger, and allure them into the way of righteousness and salvation.

The duties of the ministry require great firmness. No compromise must be made with error and sin. If unwelcome truths are inculcated, and popular sins opposed, the preacher may bring upon himself the displeasure of those whom worldly policy would incline him to please. But he must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, at every hazard. He is a servant of God, and to God he must render his account; it is, therefore, a matter of little moment, whether men are pleased or displeased. Moreover, to please men—unless it be for their good unto edification—is a hindrance of the work in which he is engaged, and tends to ruin those whom he should labor to save. The minister has a fearful account to render, who, rather than offend men, leaves them to perish in their sins, and drag others with them to destruction.

The minister's work is one of benevolence. His purity must not shun contact with the impure, if he may

apply to them the means of cleansing. His energy is not inconsistent with the utmost gentleness in the treatment of the weak and fearful. His firmness admits full scope for patience in instructing the ignorant, winning the froward, and subduing opposers. The high dignity of the ministerial office is not inconsistent with condescension to men of low estate ; but the nature and design of the office require that the gospel should be preached to the poor, its benefits conveyed to the afflicted, and its cheering light from heaven brought into the dark chamber of the dying. Among the sons and daughters of poverty and wretchedness, the minister of Jesus may tread in the footsteps of his divine Master, and may find his best work where there is least room for the intrusion of worldly motives.

### *Physician.*

The physician offers his services to the public, for the removal or prevention of disease. The preacher directs his care to the soul and its eternal interests ; the physician directs his to the body and the preservation of life and health. These are the highest interests of man relating to the present world ; for all means of earthly enjoyment are of little avail to him who is deprived of health ; and they are all necessarily relinquished for ever at death. But the preservation of life and health is important, as a means of usefulness to mankind, and of preparation for the world to come. Hence, the office of the physician is next in importance and responsibility to that of the gospel minister.

He who serves God in the ministry of the gospel, obeys a special divine call which obliges him to the service. The physician is not so distinguished from the rest of mankind ; but the office which he holds, has the approbation of God ; and the service which he renders,

if rendered aright, will be accepted and blessed. The evangelist Luke, the companion of Paul, is called in the Holy Scriptures, "the beloved physician;"<sup>1</sup> and Christ referred to the office of the physician as useful and necessary, in the words, "They that be whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."<sup>2</sup> King Asa erred, when, in his disease, he sought to the physicians, and not to the Lord.<sup>3</sup> His dependence and hope were restricted to the human agency which he employed, and not accompanied with pious acknowledgment of God, without whose blessing medical skill and effort are useless. God's disapprobation of the king's conduct teaches us to regard physicians merely as instruments and agents of Divine Providence; and it teaches physicians to perform their service in this character, if they desire success in their labors, and the blessing of him in whose hand are the life and breath of all their patients.

The physician professes superior skill in the healing art; and, if he does not possess it, he deceives his employers. If a man wholly ignorant of the steam-engine, should undertake the management of one to which is attached a train of cars filled with passengers, we should hold him responsible for all the loss of life ensuing from his misconduct. Equally responsible is the ignorant quack, who tampers with the life and health of those whom his false pretences deceive. He is guilty of fraud, in taking reward for services which possess no value; and of still greater crime, in risking or destroying the lives intrusted to him, or causing them to be lost, by preventing the attentions of those by whose skill they might have been preserved.

Before he enters on the practice of his profession, a

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<sup>1</sup> Col. iv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. ix. 12.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Chr. xvi. 12.

physician ought to acquire the knowledge which he needs, by a preparatory course of laborious and thorough study. He will be called to prescribe for cases which demand prompt attention, and which must be provided for by previous study. He cannot even study to advantage the cases which arise in his practice, without a previous general knowledge of medical science. And this knowledge cannot be acquired from books only. He should become acquainted with the appearance of diseases, under the instruction of a skilful practitioner; and should acquire a habit of scrutinizing observation, on which his judgment and skill will greatly depend, and without which he will not derive from experience the advantages that it is capable of yielding. Long experience ought to increase his skill; and to this end diligent study and scrutinizing observation ought to continue through the whole course of his professional labors.

The importance of the interests intrusted to a physician renders fidelity on his part an indispensable duty. All the assiduity and self-denying effort which any case may require should be promptly and perseveringly rendered, as if the life under his care were that of his best friend, or as if it were his own. He should never permit himself to measure his obligation by the hope of pecuniary reward. The profession has been honored by the amount of its charitable service to the poor; and an old master of the art expressed a sentiment worthy to be adopted by all his successors:—"My poor patients are my best patients; because God is their pay-master."

A physician may expect, in the course of his practice, to meet with cases which will embarrass him. A disease will sometimes present symptoms which are not sufficiently decisive of its true character to enable him to judge of it with confidence. He may be satisfied that

the usual remedies will fail in a particular case, and may be driven to the inquiry, whether some newly-recommended remedy, of which he has not sufficient knowledge, ought not to be tried. Such embarrassing cases as these will arise; and the possibility of them makes it incumbent on him to be familiar with every department of medical science, and to keep up with its progress of improvement. But when, notwithstanding his utmost efforts, such embarrassments are encountered, he should seek relief in consultation with some physician of superior skill.

Physicians may render valuable service to the public, by recommending to corporations or individuals such sanitary regulations as may be necessary for the prevention of disease. This public benefit they should never be backward to confer.

In epidemics physicians ought never to abandon their practice because of personal danger. As well might a soldier, who has kept his place during a peaceful march, desert when battle comes. The greater the danger the louder the call for service, and the stronger the obligation to render it.

Persons who are busily engaged in the practice of medicine, often find it impossible so to command their time as to attend the public worship of God on the sabbath. To this cause some have attributed the tendency to skepticism, with which the profession has been charged: but the charge is perhaps groundless. The profession has furnished eminent examples of piety; and the unfavorable influence of occasional absence from the services of the sanctuary, may be counteracted by the constant remembrance of death kept ever present to the mind by the whole course of a physician's duties. But, that his visits to the bed of affliction and the house of mourning may have the best effect on his piety, he

ought to accustom himself to converse with his patients on their spiritual interests, and to embrace every favorable opportunity of being useful to their souls as well as to their bodies. When he cannot receive religious instruction in the house of God on the Sabbath, he may impart it in the chamber of disease ; and his experience may verify the saying of Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." But because he must sometimes be absent from public worship, he ought, with scrupulous conscience, to be present whenever possible, even though it may be attended with inconvenience. He will thus avoid a habit of injurious tendency, and cultivate in himself a love of devotion.

*Lawyer.*

The lawyer offers his services, to secure the rights of those who employ him. His appeal is to the laws of the country ; and therefore he ought to be well acquainted with these laws, and with the modes of investigation adopted in the courts. He is under obligation to be faithful to his clients, and to manage the cases committed to him, with as much care and industry as if the interests at stake were his own.

The prospect of gain may sometimes tempt a lawyer to encourage litigation ; but against this temptation he ought to guard most sedulously. As a physician would be criminal, who should generate a pestilence that he may find profitable employment ; so is the lawyer criminal, who encourages lawsuits that he may obtain fees. He is unfaithful to his clients, who involves them in controversies, which it would be better for them to avoid, and which it would be in his power to prevent. A conscientious lawyer may accomplish much in promoting the harmony of a community ; and he ought to employ his professional skill for the public good.



The legal profession, as well as the medical and the clerical, may render valuable charity to the poor. Advantage is often taken of the weak and defenceless; and their rights are trampled under foot, because they are unable to employ an advocate, and bear the expense of a lawsuit. Such cases a generous man of the legal profession will not overlook; but will consider it an honor and a pleasure, to defend the poor man in his rights, with the hope of no other reward than the approbation of God and his own conscience.

Much difficulty may be experienced by a conscientious advocate, in managing a case in which his client is in the wrong. For the sake of professional reputation, he desires to succeed; and yet it may be impossible to succeed, without adopting means of doubtful propriety. Neither fidelity to a client, nor regard to reputation, can justify any criminal act; such as the bribing of jurors, the suborning of witnesses, or the utterance of falsehood. Though a client may be in the wrong, his advocate may, with good conscience, claim for him the advantage of reasonable doubt arising from deficiency of testimony; for this the law and the general interests of society allow. He may also plead every fact which will extenuate his client's wrong, and lessen the severity of an unfavorable judgment. But no lawyer ought to undertake any cause, in which he has reason to suppose that he will be expected to do anything contrary to pure morality. The profession does not require a man to be wicked; if it did, it ought to be abandoned. Though it may be justifiable to *defend* a client who is in the wrong, it is scarcely possible to conceive a case in which it will be right to aid a *plaintiff* who is seeking injustice.

To receive fees from both of the parties in a lawsuit, is a dishonesty so gross, that few men are base enough

to perpetrate it. But the lawyer is scarcely less reprehensible, who engages in a cause, when there exists between him and the party whom it will be his duty to oppose, some relation that may tend to abate the zeal of his opposition. The existence of this relation he ought at least to make known to his client, and any other fact which might, in the client's judgment, be an obstacle to his being employed.

Fidelity to a client requires that, in undertaking his cause, the counsel should express an honest opinion of its merit. Nothing should be said to excite a vain hope of success; or to foster any sinful passion. The counsellor is in part the keeper of his client's conscience; and should study to prevent him from doing wrong. To induce or permit a client to make false affidavits in the management of his cause, is highly criminal. Uninformed and inconsiderate clients need to be guarded on this point; and an honest counsellor will seek to preserve them from the guilt of perjury.

A lawyer is bound to be faithful, not to his client only, but also to the court. He is, to some extent, an officer of the court; and is under obligation so to exercise his office, that the fountains of justice shall not be corrupted. He should discountenance every attempt to operate on the judge or jury, so as to pervert judgment; and should decline to take advantage of incaution or oversight in the opposing party, unless it be merely to defeat them in doing wrong. He should, for the reputation of the court, as well as for his own sake, treat the judge, the jury, the witnesses, and the opposing counsel, with respect; and he should never degrade his office by venting bitter words to gratify his client.

The undertaking of suits for fees contingent on success, has been thought objectionable, because it places the advocate in a relation to the court different from

that which he properly sustains; and because, as is alleged, it tends to promote litigation and corruption. But were the practice prohibited, poor men, who have not means in present possession for employing an attorney, would in many cases be hindered from recovering their rights. The objection, however, is so far entitled to respect, that, when this mode of compensation is proposed, a conscientious practitioner will do well to examine carefully whether there are not other considerations which ought to prevent him from undertaking the case. An engagement to share in the expense of maintaining the suit is a violation of law.

In every employment, considerations of interest frequently tempt men to disregard the suggestions of conscience. The young practitioner may fear that, if more scrupulous in the acceptance of cases than his fellows at the bar, he will not obtain his proper share of business; but let him maintain a high-toned morality in everything that he does, and he will find in the end that honesty is the best policy. Let him exhibit all due fidelity to the court and to his clients, study his cases thoroughly, be systematic in all his arrangements, and always ready for the necessary action. He will by these means establish to himself, among the members of the profession, a reputation which will soon be known by the public; and he will find himself occupying a position that will command business.

Men of the legal profession have an opportunity of seeing human nature in its corruption. Avarice, cunning, treachery, dishonesty, cruelty, malignity, revenge, and every foul passion of the heart, are brought to light in the investigations of the courts. The frequent view of crime tends to lessen the sense of its odiousness; and the lawyer ought, therefore, to watch against this influence, and preserve in his heart the love of virtue

and hatred of vice. And there is, in the profession, another tendency against which he should guard. His whole employment relates to things of the present life. All the struggle of litigants is for earthly good; and, of all the victories obtained in courts, not one appertains to the future world. Hence, the business of his profession leads to forgetfulness of eternal interests. Let him, therefore, habituate himself to pious thought and reflection in all the turmoil of his duties. When he enters an earthly court, let him remember the last tribunal; and when contending for right before an earthly judge, let him not forget the Judge Supreme, to whom he must give his final account, and by whose righteous decision his eternal state will be determined.

*Teacher.*

Theology, medicine, and law, are sciences not included in the ordinary course of instruction for which our schools and colleges provide. To qualify for the employment of teaching, the study of a distinct science is not requisite; and, therefore, the propriety of classing teachers with men of the learned professions, has been doubted: but, however they may be ranked, they constitute a very useful class of public servants, and are intrusted with very important responsibilities, in the proper discharge of which peculiar skill is requisite.

He who undertakes to become an instructor of youth, ought to possess adequate knowledge of whatever he professes to teach. He ought, moreover, to have studied well the art of imparting instruction. Great improvements have been made in the organization and government of schools, and in the modes of teaching, and of exciting to diligence in study. With all these improvements every teacher ought to make himself familiar.

The school occupies an intermediate place between the family and civil society. The teacher should use his best efforts to prepare his pupils to enter advantageously on the duties of life; and, for this purpose, it is not enough that he merely instruct them in literature and science. Virtue is as necessary to the school as to the family and civil society; and the school in which lessons of virtue are not inculcated, fails in a most important duty.

In governing, a teacher should be firm, and always self-possessed. Anger and bluster annihilate good discipline. A wise administrator seldom has occasion for severity. The harsh discipline of former generations has deservedly become unfashionable; and experience has demonstrated that kindness and sincere interest in the pupil's welfare secure the best possible control over him, and far surpass brute force in governing his passions, and making him virtuous.

The teacher's employment gives him opportunity to enjoy the luxury of charity. To many an indigent youth a good education is the greatest benefit that he can receive from men; and this benefit a teacher has the means of bestowing. In some humble cottage he may find unpolished genius which his kindness may draw forth from obscurity, and convert into an ornament of society and a blessing to mankind.

### SECTION III. CIVIL SOCIETY.

CIVIL society is a combination of men for the purpose of mutual protection by means of civil government. The necessity for it arises from human depravity. Were men perfectly virtuous, they might live happily in natural society, without the restraints of civil government. Every one would respect the rights of his neighbors, and, in the spirit of philanthropy, seek the

general good. Whatever co-operation might be necessary to promote the welfare of the community would be effected by voluntary association ; and the efforts which might be necessary would be prompted by the spirit of benevolence.

But human depravity has rendered it impossible for men to live happily together in the state of natural society. The passions and propensities of vicious men need to be restrained for the protection of life and property. To accomplish the purpose civil government is instituted, and civil society is a combination of men sustaining some form of civil government for their own benefit. Its chief design is mutual protection ; but it may accomplish other good incidentally, as by the encouragement of learning and the advancement of the arts, necessary to a state of civilization.

The first form of civil society was patriarchal. The father was the natural protector of his children. In the protection of the family, he was under obligation to employ his own strength, and had the right to command the aid of his children according to their strength. The employment of children in this service is manifestly alluded to in the words of Scripture : "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them ; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."<sup>1</sup> This allusion takes us back to the early period in the history of mankind, when the family constituted the civil society, and the father was the civil governor.

A second form of civil society embraced a tribe descended from one ancestor. After the death of the father, the oldest brother succeeded to his authority,

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxvii. 4, 5.

and governed the family. Whole tribes remained through successive generations combined in one society under one government; and originally the authority to govern was transmitted by natural descent. But in various cases superior strength or superior skill prevailed over primogeniture, and elevated to authority a rival of the natural claimant. Alliances, conquests, or other causes frequently united two or more tribes under one government, and civil societies became enlarged into the nations which now divide the population of the globe.

While the patriarchal form of civil society continued, the right of membership was determined by natural descent. The inheritance might be taken away by injustice; but, unless forfeited by crime, it was the right of every descendant from the patriarchal ancestor. It was the exclusive right of the descendants, and no alien could claim it. The present forms of civil society so far retain the patriarchal features, that membership is universally transmitted by descent, and in many nations men of an alien race are found who are not admitted to membership as children of the family.

We have before proved it to be the will of God, that men should live in society; and we shall hereafter prove that civil government is an ordinance of God. But it cannot be proved that the whole human race should be united under one civil government; or that the boundaries or forms of the several governments are determined by the divine will, irrespective of human judgment and choice. The patriarchal features, being natural, exhibit the best claim to divine authority; and so far as this natural order becomes modified by human judgment and choice, this judgment and choice ought to be directed to the best possible accomplishment of the ends for which civil society exists.

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Since civil society is a combination of individuals for the purpose of mutual protection, the rights and duties of the parties are to be determined by the design of the combination. Society is under obligation to protect the rights of the individual members, similar to that which binds a father to protect his children; and society has a right to command the persons and property of the individual members, for the accomplishment of this object, as a father has a right to command the services of the children, according to their strength, for the protection of the family. Civil society is not, like simple society, formed by voluntary compact; but its obligations are not on that account the less sacred. So far as they depend on human judgment and choice, they have the sacredness of a contract; and beyond these limits, they have the higher sanction of the divine will.

The duties of reciprocity imply corresponding rights in the parties; and therefore fall under the government of civil society. The duties of benevolence do not imply a perfect right in the beneficiary; and because there is no right for society to protect, society cannot regulate the benefaction. On the same principle, religious duties are beyond the reach of society; and, in general, society has not its full power over the persons or property of individuals, except so far as may be necessary to protect the rights of all.

Society has a right to punish crime as a means of preventing its repetition. That it may continue to protect the rights of individuals, it has a right to protect itself from dissolution; and therefore to suppress insurrections and mobs which oppose the authority of government.

As the obligation, so the right to protect individuals belongs to civil society. He who claims the right to



redress his own wrongs, violates his obligation to society, refuses to be a member of it, and establishes in principle the government of a mob. Secret societies which place their members beyond the reach of the law, and substitute a different form of government over them, violate the obligations which they owe to civil society.

The civil societies into which mankind are divided, are severally bound to protect their own members, not only from vicious men of their own community, but also from every other community. Hence the separate communities, acting as independent bodies, are liable to have the relations between them disturbed, and to become hostile to each other. Each community, therefore, needs power, not only to keep under control its own members, but also to repel attacks from other communities. It must have power commensurate with its responsibility. Such power no other form of society possesses.

The power of civil society is liable to be abused. Instead of being employed for the protection of rights, it has often been used for purposes of ambition and oppression. On this account, a people jealous of their rights will be watchful lest the power of their government be misdirected.

Civil society is not instituted for the purpose of promoting the greatest good of the community in every possible way. Were this its responsibility, it would have the right to command the services of every individual for the accomplishment of its object; and duties of benevolence and religion would be equally under its control, with duties of reciprocity. No place would be left for the exercise of public spirit by individuals or voluntary societies; and no place for diversity of religious opinion, or rights of conscience; but the one

judgment of society would direct all, and the one power of society would control all. Not an act could be performed by any individual, which would not have some sort of relation to the public good ; and, therefore, every act would come under the control of the governing power. To guard against this violation of rights, the power of government should be chiefly confined to its proper object, which is not the promotion of the greatest possible good, but the protection of rights.

There are, we admit, cases in which the power of civil society may be advantageously exercised out of its peculiar limits. The resources of a state, for example, may be usefully employed in works of internal improvement. Here the object is the public good, and not the mere protection of rights. But, in every such case, the specific object should be one which fully commends itself to the general approbation of the community. It is as if the society acted in a new capacity ; and it ought, therefore, to possess the character of a voluntary association. On this principle public schools may be established and supported by the state ; but, though religion is even more necessary to the public good than education, it is not right that it should be under the control of civil authority. Unanimity of religious opinion does not exist ; and, if it did exist, the nature of religious service requires that it should be in the highest degree voluntary.

#### SECTION IV. CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

A COMPANY of men who have the same object in view, may proceed to accomplish it by the efforts of the several individuals, directed each by his own will ; but a slight difference of judgment as to the best mode of prosecuting the object, may prevent efficient co-operation, and cause them to fail of their purpose. Hence,

for the sake of efficiency, societies are organized, that they may act as one body, having the combined energy of the individual members directed as by one will.

Various modes of social organization are possible; but, in general, officers are appointed, who, as agents for the society, are to perform its work. For this purpose, they are invested with suitable powers, and have specified duties assigned to them. Such agents exist in civil society; and these, acting in their proper offices, and with their proper powers, constitute its *government*.

The offices of civil government are divided into legislative, judiciary, and executive. The first are appointed to make the laws of the state, and affix the penalty for violation; the second, to judge when violation has been committed; and the third, to inflict the penalty, or otherwise carry the laws into effect. These several services may be performed by a single individual, or a single class of officers; but, in the most improved forms of government, they are committed to distinct classes of men, who act independently of each other, and are agents directly responsible to society for the right exercise of the power committed to them.

The forms of civil government are various; and it cannot be affirmed that any one of them is universally preferable to all the rest. In the patriarchal state of society, the father of the family, or head of the tribe, was its monarch, invested with legislative, judiciary, and executive power. This form of government is best adapted to rude men, who, because of deficiency in intelligence and virtue, need to be governed by fear. In an improved state of society, when men generally know their duty, and are disposed to perform it without compulsion, it becomes less necessary that men should be driven to obey by fear. To such persons a milder form of government is better adapted. In every case, that

form of government is best which is best adapted to the character of the people.

Civil government is an ordinance of God, though no particular form of it has special divine authority. A wise man would choose to submit to it in its worst known form, rather than have his rights wholly unprotected; and what human wisdom finds to be indispensable to the existence and happiness of society, the divine wisdom by which society was instituted, must have intended. The ordinance may be perverted or abused; but it is, nevertheless, an ordinance of God. The Scriptures require subjection to civil rulers on the ground that they are ministers ordained of God.<sup>1</sup>

*Should be Just.*

In a former place it was said: "Distributive Justice belongs to government, and is concerned in dividing out to the several members of society their proper extent of rights; and also in subsequently varying that extent by rewards and punishments." God, who gives men their enjoyments, distributes them as he pleases, and society, in adopting regulations which determine the rights of its members, is an agent of Providence, bound to act according to the will of God, the rule of justice. The natural endowments of men, physical and intellectual, differ greatly; and the opportunities which his providence affords for obtaining enjoyment, are much greater to some men than to others. If human governments should attempt to make the rights of all men equal in extent, they would oppose the manifest will of the Creator; and any equalization which could be effected, would not continue a single day, unless the natural endowments of men were made equal. Human

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1.

governments, domestic, civil, and ecclesiastical, are bound to conform to the divine will, the supreme rule of right. We know that a general regard to human happiness is according to the divine will; and governments are therefore bound to seek the happiness of the governed. Where the means of attaining this end are not pointed out by the word or providence of God, governments, in their proper sphere of action, should be so instituted and administered by human wisdom as to secure the general good. A privation of some solid rights is indispensable in the formation of society; but these rights should be held sacred, except so far as the abridgment of them becomes necessary to the good of society; and an abridgment of them to this extent, must be according to the will of God, who has formed man a social being, and brought him into the world in the midst of society.

It is not necessary to the justice of social regulations, that they have the universal consent of those who are governed by them. Men are, for the most part, born into society previously organized; and they are bound by its regulations, before their consent can be asked. The poor man may never consent to the distribution of property, which denies him the use of his neighbor's wealth, but he is nevertheless bound to observe it. No man has a right to steal from his neighbor, because he has not yielded his formal consent to the existing distribution of property. The social regulations under which each one is born, are to him the will of God, when they do not interfere with his duty to God. He is required to obey "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,"<sup>1</sup> whether he consents to the duty or not; and the requirement is approved by the moral

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 13.

judgments of men generally. So the regulations of civil society, if wise and good, may be expected to receive the general approbation of those who are governed by them; because they tend to the general welfare. In society, in lieu of solitudinal rights, other rights are enjoyed, which a just government will aim to make equivalent. In exchanging commodities, it is not enough that an equivalent should be given for what is received, but the consent of both parties is required. But, in organizing a government, it is impracticable to obtain the consent of all who will be subject to it. Our forefathers in the Declaration of Independence, maintained the doctrine, that a just government derives its power from the consent of the governed. This, in a general view of it, is true. If a government has not the general approbation of the governed, either they lack intelligence, or it needs reform. But the justice of social arrangements cannot be dependent on the approbation of the vicious or ignorant.

#### SECTION V. LIBERTY.

GOVERNMENT and liberty conflict with each other. Government implies restraint, liberty is the absence of restraint. A man may be said to act with perfect liberty, when he does what he pleases, restrained by nothing but the laws of nature. Such liberty rightfully belongs to no one, except in solitude, or in a society of perfect intelligence and virtue. In solitude, where there can be no government, and in a society of perfect intelligence and virtue where no government is needed, unrestricted liberty is the natural right of man. In solitude, he may do what he pleases, accountable to God only; and the members of a perfect society may do what they please, because they please to do what is right. But, in all other circumstances, the only liberty

which a man can rightfully claim, is that which is left to him by the necessary restrictions of just government.

In a state of society, no one has an unrestricted enjoyment of the earth's productions; and other limitations of solitudinal rights become indispensable. The highest social liberty is enjoyed, where the restrictions of enjoyments are fewest and least important. Were all men perfectly virtuous, the necessary restrictions would be submitted to voluntarily, and governors would not need to be invested with compulsory power. The only use of government would be, to determine, by the best intelligence of the society, the proper adjustment of rights among the members of the social compact. If every individual possessed perfect intelligence as well as perfect virtue, the best possible adjustment of rights would be obvious to all, and every one would spontaneously conform to it. In this case, government would be wholly unnecessary, and the highest imaginable freedom, consistent with the social state, would be enjoyed. Civil liberty consists in the nearest practicable approach to perfect social freedom; and the degree of it necessarily depends on the intelligence and virtue of the people.

Civil government is an ordinance of God; and that form of it which is most nearly adapted to the condition of the people, is most in accordance with his will. He has not given specific directions for organizing a form of government; but has signified in general, his will that rulers should be obeyed. Marriage is a divine institution, and the superiority of the husband in the conjugal relation, has been established by divine authority. In many ages and countries, husbands have tyrannized over their wives, and the female sex have been reduced to deplorable degradation; but Chris-

tianity has never attempted to relieve their sufferings, by teaching them insubordination to their husbands. So civil governments have often been oppressive, and the people have groaned under their intolerable burden; but the voice of Christianity to them, in the midst of their sufferings, has always been, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. \* \* \* Honor the king."<sup>1</sup> Whatever abuses of the matrimonial relation may have cursed the earth, it would be a still greater curse, if marriage were banished from human society. In like manner, the worst form of human government under which men have ever suffered, is better than total anarchy. Hence, even in oppressive governments, the rulers are "powers ordained of God;" and hence, obedience has been required to the king, even when that king was Nero.

Liberty, considered as the absence of all restraint, cannot be a right of wicked men; and if possessed by them, would be licentiousness rather than the true liberty which good governments aim to establish. Unrestrained licentiousness would deprive virtuous citizens of their liberty; and hence government is necessary to their enjoyment of this right, and it becomes their interest and duty to sustain government, though at the sacrifice of some rights which they might have enjoyed, if all other men had been as virtuous as themselves. These restrictions, imposed by necessity, while they abridge liberty in some respects, secure the only possible enjoyment of what remains.

### *Religious Liberty.*

Individual responsibility to God is a prominent doctrine of religion. It is taught in various forms

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 13, 17.



throughout the Bible, and is expressly declared in the words, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."<sup>1</sup> Every man has his own intellect, his own conscience, and his own will. These faculties for moral action render him an accountable being; and as the faculties belong to the individual, the responsibility is individual. God gives commands which bind each individual; and the relation of each one to God is as distinct, and the obligations arising from it are as perfect, as if he were the only created being in the universe. Of every one it may be said, "To his own master he standeth or falleth."<sup>2</sup>

Since our obligations to God are greater than to any created being whatsoever, no created being has a right to interfere with them. No one can release us from them, or free us from the necessity of accounting for ourselves individually. If persons whom we are bound to obey in other matters, command us to disobey God, we are bound to disregard their commands. If they have power to inflict punishment, we should bear it patiently, and commit ourselves to Him who judgeth righteously. Parental authority no longer binds when it comes in competition with the authority of God, for Christ said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."<sup>3</sup> And if civil rulers require us to disobey the King Supreme, the apostles of Christ have taught us that we ought to obey God rather than men.<sup>4</sup>

Religious liberty is violated,—

1. When men are required to worship any object contrary to their own convictions of duty. The three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, who were commanded by King Nebuchadnezzar to worship

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 12.   <sup>2</sup> Rom. xiv. 4.   <sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 37.   <sup>4</sup> Acts v. 29.

his golden image, nobly asserted their religious liberty by refusing to obey; and their firmness received God's approbation, testified by their miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace.<sup>1</sup>

2. When men are required to worship in a manner which they do not approve. In various countries religious liberty has been violated, by requiring a compliance with the forms of worship peculiar to the Roman Catholic Church; and numerous acts of like injustice and oppression have proceeded from Protestant sects.

3. When men are forbidden to worship God. Daniel was forbidden to pray to God, and, for disobeying the prohibition, was cast into the den of lions.<sup>2</sup>

4. When men are required to support a form of religion which they do not approve. Religion is necessary to national prosperity and happiness; and if its existence were dependent on legal support, it would be as lawful to support it as to support common schools. But true religion is best supported by voluntary contributions. It cannot be made dependent on law without becoming a tool of government, and losing the purity and lustre with which it is adorned while free from unholy alliance with the state. Since religion does not require legal support, the maintenance of the clergy by taxation is a violation of religious liberty. It takes from the worshipper the privilege of making a free-will offering, even when it does not apply the exacted contribution to support forms of worship which he does not approve.

5. When men are denied the enjoyment of civil rights because of their religion. It is in general best for the cause of religion that clergymen should

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<sup>1</sup> Dan. iii. 12-27.

<sup>2</sup> Dan. vi. 4-23.

not hold civil offices ; but their clerical character ought not to be made a legal disqualification. When a form of religion is preferred by law to others, and compliance with it made necessary to the holding of civil office, the citizens are denied equal rights ; and, in violation of religious freedom, a penalty is inflicted on all other forms of religion. Civil government was not instituted to determine how men should worship God ; and its interference with religion is not conducive to true piety or public happiness.

The obligation to obey civil rulers ceases whenever they command disobedience to God. The first Christians were taught to submit patiently to civil despotism, however oppressive, in things pertaining to this life ; but to resist firmly, even unto death, all interference with their obligations to God. Thousands of martyrs willingly gave up their lives, rather than relinquish the right to worship God in obedience to his command. We prize the boon of civil liberty as of inestimable value, and boast that our fathers freely shed their blood to obtain it ; but Christianity teaches us to set an infinitely higher estimate on religious liberty. The New Testament does not record a single Christian life lost, or a single drop of Christian blood shed, in defence of civil liberty ; but it teaches cheerful submission to the loss of blood and life, in defence of religious liberty. It requires every disciple of Christ to give himself to the conflict, and to yield his life, if necessary, a sacrifice to the cause. In this holy cause, torrents of martyr blood have been shed ; and wherever and whenever religion and persecution have come in conflict, the true spirit of Christianity prompts to resist all encroachment on the rights of conscience, at every hazard and every sacrifice.

*Liberty of Speech and of the Press.*

Society ought to be organized and governed in such a manner as to promote human happiness in the highest possible degree; and, for this purpose, it should confer as great advantages, and impose as few restrictions, as the nature of the organization and the character of the people will allow.

Men in society render benefit to each other by the labor of the body, but much more by the labor of the mind. A very large part of the benefit which one mind confers on another, is conveyed through the medium of language; and it is, therefore, important to the interests of society, that the intercourse of minds, by means of language, should be as free as possible. By means of it, one mind may confer incalculable benefits on the whole human race, extending to the last generation that will inhabit the earth. But an instrument of so great power may be employed to effect evil. By means of it, one mind may send forth a stream of pernicious influence, that will spread with poisoning effect through a whole community, and flow down through many generations. A power so mighty for weal or woe ought not to be overlooked in the regulations of society, and the proper management of it requires the exercise of the highest wisdom.

The power of language has been greatly extended by the art of printing. Since the invention of this art, learning has advanced with a progress unknown to former ages; the arts have attained a degree of improvement which fills intelligent minds with astonishment; books are multiplied; the ability to read them is spreading rapidly everywhere; and everywhere they are brought in contact with the awakened mind of man, producing effects unknown in former generations, and,

to a great extent, forming the character and the destiny of the generations to come. A power so vast needs to be well regulated.

The general rule to be observed for regulating the liberty of speech and of the press, is to impose no unnecessary restriction. In many cases, by allowing unrestrained freedom of discussion, the evil which one mind would effect is counteracted by other minds, truth is elicited, and men are excited to cautious investigation and self-reliance, with far better results than could be attained by fallible legislation. But there are cases which need another remedy.

The delivery of lectures, and the publication of books and prints, which have a tendency to undermine the morals of society, ought to be prohibited by law. These have their effect on the young and thoughtless, before better instruction can be applied; and fatal mischief is done by corrupting the imagination and inflaming the passions, mischief which cannot be afterwards undone. The precise limit of restriction, in these cases, it may be difficult to determine; but the wisdom of legislators ought to provide that the incendiaries of social morals shall be restrained from kindling fires that it is impossible for human power and skill to extinguish. No new experiment is required to prove that corruption of morals is destructive of national prosperity and happiness.

Slander also needs legislative prohibition and penalty. The evils which it inflicts on the reputation of the individual assailed, extend beyond his reach, and often beyond his knowledge. Society ought to give its protection in this case. The assassin who stabs the reputation, and the assassin who stabs the heart, deserve alike to suffer the avenging power of the law.

## SECTION VI. DUTIES OF CIVIL OFFICERS.

I. It is the duty of *legislators* to possess the knowledge necessary for their office, and to labor for the enactment of righteous and beneficial laws.

Since civil society is organized for the protection of rights, the laws which it needs are chiefly those which define rights, and provide against their infraction. All rights are founded on the principles of morality; and the moral judgments of mankind have been employed in past ages, in deciding questions of right which have arisen between men. With these decisions of common law, and the principles on which they are founded, and the statutes which are in force, every legislator ought to be acquainted, since, without such knowledge, he is not qualified to judge whether new enactments are necessary, or what should be their character.

The modes of organization adopted by civil societies, are not uniform. Every legislator ought to understand the peculiar constitution of the society for which he acts, whether it be written or unwritten; and ought to conform his legislation to it. He is merely an agent for the society, and possesses no official power beyond that with which society invests him. If he so far disapproves the constitution of the society, that he cannot conform to it, he ought to resign his office. If, knowing the constitution, he purposely violates it, he is guilty of high crime.

A legislator ought to be acquainted with the history of past legislation, and its success; and he ought to understand the character of the people for whom he legislates. The experience of other countries, and of his own country in times past, will assist him greatly in determining what measures are best for the prevention of wrong. But the effects of legislation vary according

to the character of the people; and therefore a legislator cannot be directed by experience only; but he must understand the character of his people, that he may be able to adapt the teaching of experience to their peculiarities.

A legislator ought to labor, according to his best ability, for the enactment of righteous and beneficial laws. As he acts primarily for the protection of rights, he should carefully regard the rights of every individual as sacred; and place them, as far as possible, beyond the reach of encroachment. He must not legislate for his own personal good, or the good of a particular party, or section of the community. He acts for the whole people; and to the good of the whole people his legislation should be directed. But it should be his fixed maxim, that the welfare of a people cannot be promoted by unrighteousness; and ought not if it could. He may compromise with associates in office, who may differ from him in judgment, on questions of expediency for the public welfare; but on a question of right, he should admit no compromise. Against all wrong, he should labor firmly and perseveringly, to the full extent of his official power.

II. The *judiciary* department of government, includes judges and jurors: the judges interpret the laws; the jurors decide questions of fact.

Judges, like legislators, ought to be well acquainted with the principles of morality on which the laws are founded; with the past decisions of courts, and with the statute laws in force. They ought, moreover, to be thoroughly acquainted with the constitution of the country for which they act. This last knowledge is specially necessary for them; because the responsibility devolves on them, of setting aside an enactment of the

legislature as null and void, if it be contrary to the constitution.

While the laws of the legislature conform to the constitution, the judges have no right to reject them. It is their duty to interpret; but they have no right to nullify or repeal; and they should interpret honestly, regardless of all consequences to themselves or others.

Jurors are bound to decide, without favor to any party, the questions of fact which may be submitted to them, according to the testimony presented. No threats or bribes should induce them to pervert judgment in the slightest degree. They act for the good of the whole people; and they ought to feel the obligation of preserving the fountains of justice pure. They act under the solemnity of an oath, and they ought to feel their responsibility to the God of truth and justice, to whom they must give account.

III. *Executive* officers are bound to execute the laws without fear, and without favor.

It does not properly belong to the executive power, to enact or to interpret the laws. The highest executive officer sometimes possesses, according to the constitution, a veto power over the enactments of the legislature. So far, he is co-ordinate with the legislature, in the service of law-making; but when he has exercised this power according to the constitution, his legislative function ceases. As an executive officer, he is bound to execute the laws, whether he approves them or not; and, in the interpretation and application of them, he is bound by the decisions of the judiciary. Complete and strict subjection of executive officers to the laws, is indispensable to the liberty of the people.

#### SECTION VII. DUTIES OF CITIZENS.

WHILE civil government is confined to its proper



object, and administered with justice, it is the duty of every citizen to yield it his obedience and support. In a government established by the will of the people, the obligation of each individual has the force of a contract. The descendants of those by whom the government was originated, come under its authority without their formal consent; but, by the will of God, they are bound to take their place in society, according to the obligations entered into by their fathers. Even in governments not formed by the will of the people, the authority of God binds the citizens to yield their obedience and support.

1. Every citizen is under obligation to the government, to fulfil all his duties of reciprocity. He would be under obligation to do this, if no government existed; but government has authority to compel the performance of these duties; and this authority brings on him a new obligation. He must do justice to all, not only as a moral being bound to do right, but as a member of civil society, organized for the protection of rights. He cannot consistently claim protection for his own rights, if he violates the rights of others.

2. Citizens are under obligation to relinquish to society the right of redressing their injuries. It is the duty of society to protect its members; but cases may arise, in which time is not allowed for the power of society to interpose. In such cases, the right of self-protection belongs to the individual; but when he has time to invoke the protection of society, he is bound, by his relation to the community, to commit the protection of his rights to government. After wrongs have been perpetrated, penalties need to be inflicted to prevent their repetition; but individual citizens reject the authority of government if they undertake to redress *their own wrongs*. Were this course taken by all,

government would be abolished, and society subjected to all the evils of anarchy.

3. Citizens are bound to pay their several parts of the public expenses. Government cannot be sustained without expense; and every individual ought cheerfully to pay his quota. The benefits received from a good government, are an abundant compensation for its cost; and to receive these benefits without paying for them, is a fraud on the other members of the community, by whom the government is sustained.

4. Citizens are under obligation to support their government by physical strength, as well as by pecuniary contributions. Cases sometimes occur, in which the strength of the executive officers is insufficient for the enforcement of the laws; and such cases would occur much more frequently, if it were not understood that these officers can command to their aid the physical strength of the community. The civil ruler would hold the sword in vain, if it were wielded by the unaided strength of his own arm; and he would cease to be a terror to evil doers, if citizens were under no obligation to give him physical support.

5. In order to the stability and success of their government, citizens are bound, as far as they can, to render it virtuous and efficient. The best form of government must be unsuccessful, if the administration of it be committed to weak or dishonest hands. When citizens elect their rulers, they are under obligation to intrust public offices to those only who will discharge the duties with ability and faithfulness. They are bound, moreover, to promote as much as possible the general diffusion of intelligence and virtue, as indispensable to the stability of the government and the welfare of the community.

## SECTION VIII. POLITICAL OPPRESSION.

SOCIAL regulations ought to be established on the principles of justice, and these principles are violated in such cases as the following:—

1. When property is taken by arbitrary power. This is frequently done in despotic governments.

2. When property is taken for purposes not necessary to the government. If pyramids are built for deceased monarchs, or splendid palaces built, and large armies maintained, merely to gratify the pride and ambition of the living, all exactions of property from individuals for these or other purposes, not required by the good of the community, are violations of right.

3. When the tax assessed on each individual is not made proportionate, as nearly as possible, to the benefit which he receives from society. The laws render protection to the person and property of the individual; and for this protection he ought to pay willingly a *fair quota* of the expense. The tax on property ought in general to vary according to its value, so far as it comes under the protection of the law.

4. When unnecessary restrictions are imposed on personal liberty. Men ought to be permitted to pursue their own happiness in the way of their choice, if not inconsistent with the public good. Tyrannical rulers have often imprisoned without just cause, and have detained persons in prison by unnecessary delay of trial.

5. When religious liberty is violated. Under governments where some form of religion is established by law, it is impossible that men should have full enjoyment of religious liberty.

6. When life is unjustly taken, or personal injury inflicted, by the ruling power. Such injuries have sometimes been committed under forms of law; at other

times without such forms at the mere will of tyrannical despots.

7. When the government fails to yield due protection to the citizens. If it inflicts no positive evil, the requirement to sustain it is oppressive, unless it accomplishes in some good degree the purposes for which governments are instituted.

### *Right of Revolution.*

When governments violate their obligations to the people, the duty of citizens varies according to circumstances. Evils must be endured patiently, when it is impossible to remedy them, or when the remedy would require some violation of duty, or would endanger the welfare of the community. The most corrupt government has much in it that is worth preserving; and the reform of abuses should be effected, if possible, without the loss of this remaining good. It is impossible to prescribe definite rules for every case which may arise; but,

1. Citizens are not bound to yield passive obedience to government, whatever it may command. The apostles of Christ refused to obey the rulers who required them to desist from preaching the gospel, and justified themselves on the ground that it was right "to obey God rather than men."<sup>1</sup>

2. It is, in general, better to suffer wrong from civil rulers, than to resist. If they command what is wrong, we may refuse to obey, and patiently endure the consequences. The effect of this course is in general far better than that of resistance by force. Resistance is civil war; and civil war is attended with evils which every wise and virtuous man will seek to avoid.

3. If the reformation of government cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 29.

effected without war and bloodshed, it ought never to be attempted rashly. There may be circumstances in which a combined attempt to overthrow despotic power, and establish a better form of government, may become lawful. What these circumstances are, is a question of difficulty, for the practical solution of which a high degree of wisdom is necessary. To excite insurrection against existing authority, without a rational prospect of ultimate good, is criminal. The wisdom and justice of any particular attempt at revolution, must be determined by the facts of the case. These may be such as to indicate the will of Providence, that the attempt be made; and the benefits resulting, may, as in the case of the American Revolution, give satisfactory assurance that the movement was directed by the finger of God, and was made with his approbation.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### DUTIES TO SELF.

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#### SECTION I. CARE OF HEALTH.

OUR enjoyments depend much on our health. Without health, the food which we eat with pleasure at other times, becomes loathsome; the sweetest strains of music cease to charm; and the beauties of nature, which were before contemplated with delight, lose all their attraction. Instead of these pleasures, sickness brings pain and suffering; often producing fretful impatience, and rendering life a burden. Hence, self-love requires that we should preserve our health, so far as it is within our power; and, since many of the causes which affect health, are within our power, it becomes a duty of self-love so to regulate these causes as to promote our own happiness.

Health is necessary to duty as well as to enjoyment. Without it, we cannot labor for the public good, or for the glory of God. Whatever may be our intellectual power, it fails to be useful to others, when the physical strength is exhausted by disease; and, whatever may be our eminence in piety, we then cease to perform active service for God, and can glorify him only by patient endurance and submission. Hence, we are under stronger obligation than self-love can impose, to

attend to the preservation of health. Duty to God and our fellow-men requires it.

Young persons are too commonly thoughtless respecting their health, and possess very little of the knowledge which is necessary for its preservation. They enter on pleasure, business, or study, as if their bodies were formed of imperishable materials; and the ardor of their pursuit is not abated, until health is perhaps irrecoverably gone, or some organ or function of the material and perishable fabric permanently injured. Many a life would have been far happier and more useful, if its days of vigor had been spent with a wise regard to health. Parents owe it to their children, and teachers to their pupils, to direct early attention to this subject, and to give them instruction for the preservation of health.

Temperance is necessary to health; temperance in eating, in drinking, in labor, in study. The indulgence of the appetite may yield present pleasure, at the expense of future enjoyment, and ability for future usefulness. The glutton and the inebriate destroy themselves by a species of suicide, which, though it may be slow in its operation, is certain in its effect. Nor is health in danger from excessive indulgence only. Excessive labor, either of body or mind, may destroy the ability to labor. Some are capable of performing more labor than others; and every one should endeavor to ascertain the measure of his strength, and so to regulate his efforts, and the continuance of them, that his powers may be employed, on the whole, to the best possible effect.

Exercise is necessary to health. The exercise of the muscles increases the muscular strength, and, in general, every corporeal function derives strength from exercise, if it be in a healthy state; but diseased organs

in general require rest, and also organs whose strength has been exhausted by labor. Action and rest must be alternated to produce their best effect. Action, too long continued, may produce permanent exhaustion; and habitual inaction always produces debility. These remarks apply to mental as well as bodily labor. Health is promoted by wisely-directed mental effort, and in the records of longevity are found the names of men distinguished for intellectual power and studious habits.

*Drunkenness.*

Drunkenness is a crime which destroys soundness of both body and mind. Alcoholic liquor, when taken in sufficient quantity, deprives of consciousness and muscular power; and consequently unfits a man for all the duties of life. What he owes to himself, to his family, to society, and to God, must be unpaid during this period of mental and bodily imbecility. After a time, the effects of the poisonous drug so far subside that he regains possession of himself, but he is not the man that he was before. His physical and moral powers have received a shock, and insidious habit has begun to undermine the foundation on which he stands. Every repetition of the intoxicating potion binds another chain around him, until habit becomes irresistible, and he surrenders himself a helpless and hopeless victim to ruin and death. Multitudes have pursued this career to its sad termination, and have left behind them a melancholy warning to their survivors.

The effects of drunkenness on human happiness are evil to an extent that exceeds all calculation. The inebriate himself is made unhappy, and finds existence a burden, from which he seeks relief in the soothing oblivion which the stupefying cup affords him. How many broken-hearted wives, how many neglected and



ruined children, are among the victims of drunkenness! How disastrous have been its effects on industry, good management, and all the springs of social prosperity!

Drunkenness produces evils beyond those which arise from mere neglect of duty. While the drunken man deprives his family and society of his services, he does not annihilate himself, but remains an oppressive burden which they are compelled to bear. And often the maddening demon within drives him to perpetrate crimes over which he himself weeps at returning intervals of sanity. Many have felt that the suicide of drunkenness is too lingering; and have sought, by speedier self-destruction, to free society from a burden which they were unwilling longer to impose: but the majority of inebriates consent to remain in the world till their physical powers are exhausted, and their opportunity of doing evil necessarily terminated.

The question, how far a drunken man is responsible for crimes committed in drunkenness, is one which jurists are compelled to consider, and which every man ought well to consider who allows himself to sip the intoxicating beverage. It has been held that the drunken man is responsible for what he does, according to the measure of consciousness which he retains; and responsible for getting drunk, according to the probability of the consequences which might ensue. If we suppose the guilt of a sober man, while in a state of perfect consciousness, to be the *whole* guilt, then the guilt of the drunken man, who retains only half of his consciousness, will be *one-half* of the whole guilt. And then, if it were known beforehand that the probability of the mischief was one-half of the certainty, the guilt of getting drunk has been computed to be *one-half of the remainder*; making altogether his responsibility to be *three-fourths* of the whole guilt. But this mode of

computation is not correct. When men are pressed to decide between conflicting duties, it becomes necessary to estimate the probabilities of good or evil to result from the courses of conduct out of which they must make their selection. But no duty urges any man to drink intoxicating liquor; and he is therefore bound to abstain, not merely by the *probability*, but also by the *possibility*, that evil may ensue. If he voluntarily madden himself, when there is no necessity, he is responsible for that madness with all its consequences. Instead of allowing drunkenness to be an excuse for crime, it ought rather to be held guilty of the crimes which, though not actually perpetrated, it is liable to originate. If human courts will not judge it with so much severity, this will probably be the rule of its trial at the last tribunal. It seems to men a little matter to drink a few drops of pleasant liquid; as it seemed to mother Eve an indulgence which could not possibly deserve the penalty of death, to eat the fruit which she saw to be pleasant to the eyes, and good for food.<sup>1</sup> But God has chosen to try men's allegiance to him, by such matters as eating and drinking; and, trifling as the act may in itself appear, he sets its consequences before us, and warns us by all the fearfulness of his righteous retribution, to abstain from every forbidden indulgence. Men may think themselves their own masters, and indulge in the pleasures of wine at their own will, but God claims dominion over them, and has declared that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

The habit of drinking intoxicating liquors is often acquired in early life; and the use of them in society, as tokens of hospitality and friendship, has tended greatly to multiply the victims of drunkenness. Young

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 10.

persons should guard against the habit, as they would guard against having their eyes put out, or their hands cut off. If eyes or hands have been lost by youthful folly, the regrets of future years cannot restore them ; and experience has shown, that an early acquired habit of drinking, though it may be lamented and feebly resisted in after life, almost invariably brings the subject of it to the drunkard's grave.

#### SECTION II. INDUSTRY AND FRUGALITY.

SELF-LOVE requires that we provide for the future. After the best possible care of our health, days of sickness may come, in which we shall be unable to provide for the wants that may then oppress us ; or old age may come, with long-continued debility, and incapacity for labor. A prudent foresight requires that we make provision while in health and vigor, for such days of feebleness or decrepitude. Hence self-love imposes the obligation to be industrious and frugal.

Industry is a virtue on which our success in every laudable attempt greatly depends. It is an appointment of heaven, that bread shall be obtained by labor, and that he who will not work, shall not eat. Slothfulness tends to poverty ; and the man who indulges present love of ease is liable to suffer future want of bread. The student who consults his ease, will fail to make good progress in the attainment of knowledge. The traveller who is chiefly solicitous for comfort and repose, will make slow progress in his journey. God has given to the sons of men to be exercised with labor ; and, in every business of life, he who would attain his object must pursue it with industry.

Frugality is another virtue which self-love recommends. What industry provides will be of no avail for the future if it be wasted through negligence, or squan-

dered on present gratification. Frugality opposes the demands for present indulgence, and preserves the supplies for future use. Industry and frugality are associate virtues which need the aid of each other. By their joint exercise, future competence can scarcely fail to be secured.

These virtues are enforced by higher authority than that of self-love. Paul taught the Christians of Ephesus to labor that they "may have to give to him that needeth."<sup>1</sup> If we would practise benevolence to the poor, if we would promote the public good, if we would advance the cause of religion, we have need to practise industry and frugality.

#### SECTION III. SELF-DEFENCE.

As men are under obligation to take care of their health, and to provide food, and whatever else may be necessary for the continuance of their lives; so they are under obligation to guard their lives from surrounding or threatening dangers. If assaulted by wild beasts or hostile men, they are not at liberty to exercise no care, or use no effort, to save themselves from being maimed or killed. If a father should permit the child at his side to be seized and devoured by a wild beast, which he could have readily driven away, or destroyed, he is guilty of that child's death. So the Saviour of mankind reasoned, when he said, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil; to save life, or to kill?"<sup>2</sup> The question to be decided was, whether it was right for him to heal on the Sabbath day. The alternative was the mere omission to heal; and this alternative, the mere omission to heal when he had opportunity, is accounted, in his reasoning, a positive evil.

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Mark iii. 4.

To neglect an opportunity of doing good, is to do evil; to neglect an opportunity of saving life, is to destroy it. On this principle, the father who neglects to save his child, destroys it; and so the man who loses his life by neglecting to employ the proper means of self-defence, commits a species of suicide.

Self-defence is required by self-love; but, like the duties considered in the last two sections, it is enforced by higher obligations than that which mere self-love can impose. The father is bound to protect his child from higher considerations than the mere impulse of parental affection; and so a man is bound to protect his own life from higher considerations than the mere impulse of self-love. The authority of conscience and of God interposes. A man's child and his own life are placed under his special guardianship by the Creator; and as he has no right to destroy either, so he has no right to permit either to be destroyed by his voluntary neglect.

In self-defence we are bound to determine our course of action, with a due regard to conflicting obligations. A man who is attacked by his neighbor's dog is under obligation to defend himself, and also under obligation not to harm his neighbor's property. When these obligations come into conflict, the latter must yield to the former, so far as necessity requires, and no further. If he can defend himself by frightening the dog, he ought not to kill him. The same principle applies to cases of assault by human beings; but the difficulty in its application is far greater. The obligation to self-defence is the same in both cases, but the conflicting obligation is much greater when the assailant is human, because the life of a rational and immortal being is of far greater value than the life of a brute. When these obligations come into conflict with each other, every

conscientious wise man, who is compelled to act in such trying circumstances, will desire the counsel of others lest he should err through weakness of judgment or strength of passion. Hence every conscientious wise man will rejoice that civil government has been established for the adjudication of such cases; and he will gladly, whenever it is practicable, refer all such cases to the decision of the civil tribunal. But it is not always practicable to appeal to the civil authority. The emergency may require too speedy action to allow consultation with any one, and it is, therefore important that some general principles be fixed in the mind by which we may direct our conduct in such emergencies.

I. It is our duty to avoid hostile assault, if we can.

The instructions of Scripture are explicit on this subject. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."<sup>1</sup> The precise means of avoiding hostility are not pointed out; but the obligation to seek peace is expressed by a strongly emphatic tautology, in which the phrase, *If it be possible*, is followed by another of like import, *as much as in you lieth*. We are bound to avoid making an assault on any one, and, if it be made on us, we are bound to avoid it, or escape from it, if possible. By prudently withdrawing from exposure to danger, we may give time for the fury of the assailant to subside, and may not only preserve ourselves from receiving injury, and from temptation to inflict injury, but we may do great good to the assailant, by preventing him from doing what he might afterwards remember with bitter regret.

In opposition to the pacific instructions which are given in the Holy Scriptures, the pride of the human

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 18.

heart inclines to resist every evil with which we may be assailed or threatened. It is deemed cowardly to retire from conflict, and the thoughtless crowd honor and applaud the man who, in disobedience to God, risks his life to meet and repel an assault with which he is menaced. It requires more heroism than most men possess to obey God, and do right in face of public scorn and contempt. Many who quail not before weapons of death, are abject cowards in opposition to popular odium. But the truly great and good man will fearlessly do right at whatever hazard.

II. It is lawful, in self-defence, to restrain by force the power of an assailant.

The words of the apostle Paul, cited above, clearly imply that it is not possible, in all cases, to live peaceably with all men. Assaults may be made upon us, from which we have not time or opportunity to escape. In such cases, if any room is left for appeal to the moral feelings of the assailant, a triumph may be achieved by disarming his rage, and inducing him to do right. If we can gain this triumph, even at the cost of some personal suffering, we shall have a rich reward. But if appeals to moral feeling avail nothing, and non-resistance on our part serves only to encourage aggression, we are not bound to submit passively to his violence. We are bound, however, to defend ourselves, if possible, without doing harm to the assailant. We may avert his blow, or we may seize his arm when raised to inflict it, or we may wrest the deadly weapon from his hand. In such cases we infringe his personal liberty; but he has no right to use his personal liberty to our injury, and therefore we commit no trespass on his rights when we restrain his violence only so far as is necessary for our safety.

III. It is lawful, in self-defence, to arrest the pro-

gress of an assault, by doing personal harm to the assailant.

If an assassin attempts my life, and I can, by a well-directed blow, break the arm which is driving the dagger to my heart, I save my life, by doing him a small measure of harm. Would it have been better that I had passively submitted to his criminal design? My life is of more value than his arm, and when the choice is forced upon me, I am bound to prefer my own preservation.

The principle which has been here set forth, does not justify a blow inflicted in return for a blow received. Retaliation commonly provokes, rather than prevents injury; and, apart from its evil tendency, it proceeds from a temper of mind inconsistent with pure benevolence. The aim of a blow inflicted in retaliation, is harm to our neighbor; and this harm our mind contemplates as the end of the action. The aim of a blow to prevent injury, is self-preservation, without desire to harm even the enemy who is attempting our life. We may inflict the blow, with poignant regret that he will receive harm from it. In this case, the injury which he receives, is properly the result of his own crime, and may be viewed as self-inflicted.

Punishment may be inflicted for crimes that have been committed, as a means for the general prevention of crime; but this means of prevention belongs properly to civil society. Here retaliation is allowable. "Life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."<sup>1</sup> Civil government is an ordinance of God, designed to prevent injury by the infliction or threat of punishment, and invested with power for this purpose. It is so far clothed with

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. xix. 21.



the divine prerogative of taking vengeance; and the civil ruler is called a revenger<sup>1</sup> of evil. But individuals are bound, as members of society, and as subjects of God's government, to leave the avenging of their injuries to God, the supreme governor, and to the subordinate governors whom he has appointed on earth for this purpose.

IV. It is lawful for me to take the life of an assailant, when my own life cannot be otherwise preserved from his injurious and unprovoked assault.

If the father of a family sees a savage foe approaching, and knows that it is his intent to murder every member of the family, if escape is impossible, and appeal to moral feeling either impossible or absolutely hopeless, what is this father's duty in the case? Ought he to give up, without resistance, his own life, and the lives of his wife and children, to the murderous monster? Were it a tiger that sought their blood, no doubt could exist that he ought to save his family, by killing the ferocious beast; but is the obligation to protect his family less imperative, because the ferocious animal that approaches, possesses a human form? In that form he is bound to recognise a fellow-man, a neighbor, so far as he can perform towards him duties of reciprocity or benevolence; but the man has voluntarily and criminally placed himself in circumstances which make it necessary that he should be treated as a wild beast, and in which the usual manifestations of benevolence are impossible. He acts the part of a savage beast, and must be treated as such, so far as the protection of the family requires.

Will it be said that the father ought to save his family by intimidating the savage? We concede that

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 4.

he ought not to take his life, if the preservation of the family can be accomplished by other means. But the right to intimidate, by a threat of violence, implies a right to execute the threat in case of necessity. Such threats, from a conscientious man, must prove unavailing, if it be known that it is unlawful to execute them.

If an individual has no right to take life in any case, the father who saves his family by killing their intended murderer, is himself guilty of murder. But the moral judgments of mankind will never so decide; and no human law will ever condemn and punish such an act as murder. The divine law<sup>1</sup> has decided that it is not murder to kill a thief who breaks into the house by night to steal; and if it permitted a man to defend his property, much more did it permit him to defend the lives of his family.

If it be established that a man may lawfully take life to save himself and his family from being murdered, the principle involved will apply when but a single life is to be preserved. If it is right to protect one's family, it is right to protect one's self. In this case it is true that one life is set over against one life; and a doubt may be suggested, whether it is right for one life to be taken, if but one is to be preserved by it. But we never plead that a murderer's life ought to be spared because he has murdered only one man. His life is equally forfeited to the law, whether he has murdered one or many. If a man should allow himself to be murdered by an assailant, rather than take his life, he gives up his own life for a life that will be forfeited to the law, after the deed of murder has been consummated. He permits two lives to be lost to the commu-

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxii. 2.

nity, when he might have saved one; and that one the life which ought to have been saved, and which had been placed under his special guardianship by the Author of his being. Duty to the community, therefore, and duty to God, require that he should protect himself in such circumstances.

But that a man who takes life in self-defence may be guiltless, the assault on him must be wholly unjust and unprovoked. If he has brought it on himself, when he might have avoided it, God will not hold him guiltless. He must, moreover, be free from all revengeful passion, and from every feeling of pleasure, or abatement of regret, from the consideration that the individual killed was his enemy. He must love him as a fellow-creature, and mourn over him with unaffected sorrow, as over an erring brother who has perished in his sin.

OBJECTION 1.—Jesus Christ was eminently harmless. He inflicted pain and suffering on no one, but went about doing good; and he commanded his disciples: "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."<sup>1</sup> It is contrary to his religion, as taught both by example and precept, to do harm to any one, and especially so great harm as to kill the body, and hurry the soul from the only place of repentance and pardon, to the judgment and retributions of the future life.

When two of Christ's disciples asked leave to call down fire from heaven on some who had displeased them, he said: "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."<sup>2</sup> He came into the world on an errand of mercy: and his whole intercourse with mankind accorded with the benevolent design of his mission. Once he pronounced a curse;

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 56.

but it was on a fig-tree. Once he permitted demons to do mischief; but it was to a herd of swine. To human beings, he did good, and good only, in feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and casting out devils. In like manner, his followers, if they imitate his example, and obey his precepts, will do good to mankind, even to their enemies and persecutors.

But in a world such as ours, benevolent designs meet with obstacles to their accomplishment. Benevolence requires that we should seek to please our neighbor for his good; but it often happens, that, in promoting his good, we must give him pain instead of pleasure; and it often happens, that we must give pain to individuals, in promoting the public good. Even the tender Jesus gave pain to the covetous hearts of those whose tables of money he overthrew in the temple; and, when he drove out those who bought and sold, if he did not give pain to their persons, the whip of cords which he used, indicated that he claimed a right to harm their persons as well as their property if it should be necessary. No one doubts that, when it becomes necessary to the accomplishment of a benevolent design, a Christian father may give the pain of chastisement to a disobedient son; a Christian surgeon, the pain of amputation to a patient with a diseased limb; and a Christian ruler, the pain of punishment to one who has violated the laws. In such cases, the pain or harm is not injury. It violates no right, and is not contrary to the pure benevolence of Christianity. Even when the harm done amounts to the loss of life, the individual who renders the taking of his life necessary, is guilty of his own death; and it is his own crime that plunges him unprepared into eternity. He has virtually dashed out his own brains against a wall of defence, by which every man is surrounded.

OBJECTION 2.—Jesus Christ expressly forbade his followers to resist evil; and commanded them, when smitten on one cheek, to turn the other.

The instructions of Christ here referred to, prohibit retaliation. They teach us how to act, not for the prevention of injury, but after the injury has been received. The language of Christ is, "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever will compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."<sup>1</sup> The cheek has been smitten, the coat has been taken, the compulsion to go a mile has completed its effect. In every case, the injury has been consummated; and the question is not how to prevent it, but what return to make for it. It is commanded that we shall return good for evil; and in each case, the good specified is precisely such as is opposed to retaliation. Retaliation would require us to smite the injurer's cheek in return, or to take away his cloak, in place of the coat which he has wrongfully wrested from us. But, to show that retaliation must be avoided, a course of conduct is prescribed, directly opposed to it. That it was the Saviour's design to prohibit retaliation, is further evident from the fact, that he is commenting on the words of Moses, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."<sup>2</sup> The import of the instruction is, to consent that the injury be repeated, rather than retaliate. When Jesus was himself smitten on one cheek, at his last trial, he did not literally turn the other; but he did not retaliate. On the other hand, he did not invite another blow; but made such an appeal to jus-

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 39-41.

<sup>2</sup> Verse 38.

tice as was adapted to prevent repetition of the injury. "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"<sup>1</sup> and his own example teaches us how to obey his precept in its true import.

The meaning of Christ's precept is unfolded in the words of Paul, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. \* \* \* Avenge not yourselves."<sup>2</sup> In all this, the injury is supposed to have been received; and we are forbidden to retaliate, or take vengeance. This is the doctrine of Christianity, as to the right mode of treating those who have injured us; a doctrine not unknown in the Old Testament dispensation; for it is said in the book of Proverbs, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink."<sup>3</sup> But neither the Old Testament, nor the New, prohibits the use of proper means for the prevention of injury.

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<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 17, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. xxv. 21.

## CHAPTER XV.

### POWERS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

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#### SECTION I. MODES OF RESTRAINT.

IN Chapter XIII. it was shown that civil society is organized chiefly for the protection of rights ; and that, in affording this protection, it employs the agency of government. In Sections 6 and 7 of that chapter, we considered the duties of rulers and citizens—of rulers as the agents, and of citizens as the members, of civil society.

In Section 3 of the last chapter, we have seen that individual citizens relinquish to society the protection of their rights, so far as the interposition of society can be invoked ; and that, hence, the redress of past wrongs is wholly relinquished to society ; and that this arrangement has the sanction of the Christian religion, which denies to individuals the right of avenging themselves, and makes civil rulers the sole avengers of wrong.

From the nature and design of the organization, civil society is under obligation to prevent and to punish injuries. The punishment of crimes is an important and necessary means of preventing their repetition, and the threat of punishment becomes the chief means of protecting the rights of citizens from injury. It is, therefore, the duty of society to affix, by established

laws, suitable penalties to crimes; and to invest government, its agent, with power to inflict these penalties.

The principal means of punishing and preventing injuries are four: imprisonment, capital punishment, war, and slavery. Each of these we shall consider in a separate section; but, before we proceed to them, we shall briefly notice some subsidiary modes which have been adopted for obtaining the ends of good government.

*Surety of the Peace.*—When one man declares on oath that he fears injury from another, the law requires that the person feared shall give bond and security to keep the peace. The violation of the condition of this bond is attended by a pecuniary penalty, and the fear of paying this penalty becomes a motive to refrain from committing injuries.

*Fines.*—The laws sometimes prescribe pecuniary penalties for specified crimes. These are called fines.

*Banishment.*—An individual may prevent injury by keeping at a distance from the injurious person. Society has sometimes imitated this mode of procedure by requiring the injurious person to leave its territory.

*Stripes.*—Pain of body is sometimes inflicted as a punishment for crime. The most common mode of inflicting pain is by whipping. The Mosaic law allowed forty stripes, and forbade more; but, in practice, the Jews limited the number to thirty-nine, lest, by a mistake in the count, the prescribed number might be exceeded. Hence has arisen the legal limitation of stripes to the number of thirty-nine.

## SECTION II. IMPRISONMENT.

AN individual who is assailed may, to protect himself from injury, seize the arm which is uplifted to inflict a blow. This seizure infringes the personal liberty of the



assailant, and society cannot protect the rights of all the citizens without similar infringement of personal liberty when necessary. This may be done by imprisonment.

Atrocious crimes are sometimes punished with imprisonment for life. In such cases, the criminal is regarded as too dangerous to be turned loose in the community. Generally imprisonment is for a limited period, which is proportioned to the magnitude of the crime. The temporary confinement is considered a punishment sufficient to deter the individual and others from repeating the offence. In our penitentiaries, labor is added to confinement, as a punishment and means of reform to the criminal; and as a mode of lessening to the state the expense of his confinement.

Persons charged with atrocious crimes are frequently imprisoned till they can be brought to trial. Society exercises this power over personal liberty, because it is indispensable to the purposes of justice that such persons should not have opportunity to escape. Through the unavoidable imperfection of human governments, innocent persons may sometimes be imprisoned on false accusation; and, therefore, this indispensable power of society ought to be exercised with much caution. The probability of guilt should be well established, and the accused should be brought to trial without unnecessary delay.

### SECTION III. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

CIVIL society has a right to punish with death those who commit the crime of murder. After the deluge, God said to Noah, the father of the new world, "Who-so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."<sup>1</sup> In the Mosaic law, provision was made to

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. ix. 6.

punish murderers with death. And in the New Testament we are taught that civil rulers are appointed by God to be a terror to evil-doers ; and that, for this purpose, they are armed with the sword, which is an instrument of death. It is obvious that they could not be a terror to evil-doers by the mere holding of the sword, if they were not permitted to use it. It appears, therefore, that, in all ages of the world, it has been the will of God that capital punishment should be used, as a means of deterring wicked men, and protecting the virtuous in the enjoyment of a peaceable and orderly life.

Under the Mosaic law, numerous crimes besides murder were punished with death. The nation of Israel were under a peculiar covenant, which constituted Jehovah their God and King, and placed them under peculiar obligations to obey his statutes. Hence disobedience was prohibited under severer penalties than would have been suited to other circumstances. A man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day was, by divine command, stoned to death ;<sup>1</sup> but no one will maintain, that this divine command obliges all civil rulers to punish Sabbath-breakers in the same manner. The general principle of justice which pervaded the Mosaic code, was life for life—an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. By this principle the administration of justice was to be governed, in all cases for which no special divine statute made provision. This principle accords precisely with that which God announced to Noah as the basis of a criminal code for his descendants. As this divine rule was intended for the whole posterity of Noah, and as even the Israelites were bound by it in the absence of an express statute, we conclude that it

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers xv. 32-36.

is a rule for us to whom no other criminal law has been given by the supreme Ruler.

The severity with which crimes were punished under the Hebrew theocracy, teaches the fearfulness of sinning against God ; and we ought, with Paul, to derive this instruction from it : " If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward ; how shall we escape." <sup>1</sup> " He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses ; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy," &c. <sup>2</sup> Civil rulers are not required to inflict vengeance on all who slight the grace, or despise the authority of God. They should not exercise the fearful power of the sword, beyond the limits within which they have God's authority to wield it. Hence capital punishment ought to be inflicted for no other crime than murder. Since the moral quality resides in the intention, a fully-proved intention of murder may without injustice be treated as if the crime had been consummated.

Some who admit the propriety of capital punishment, as a divine appointment, maintain that the right to inflict it cannot be derived from natural law. There is at least sufficient doubt on this subject, to render us thankful to the Author of revelation, that he has not left us to be guided in this important matter by our own fallible reasonings. But if the doctrine of revelation on the point, could not be established by unaided reason to our full satisfaction ; it harmonizes with the best deductions of reason, and with the established principles of natural law.

All laws for the government of mankind are mere advice, if they are not sustained by penalties ; and

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 28, 29.

penalties affixed are unavailing, if power exists nowhere to inflict them. To inflict a penalty for past crime, is a work of vengeance forbidden to individuals; and were it equally prohibited to society, law would be worthless. Injuries are avenged by society, to prevent their repetition. Now, if an individual may take the life of an assailant to preserve his own life, the right of society over the assailant's life cannot be less; otherwise, society, if its power could be invoked to protect the assailed party at the moment of danger, has a responsibility to which its power is unequal. We infer, hence, that society, in protecting the lives of citizens from a murderer, has a right to take the murderer's life. From the nature of the case, its power cannot in general be invoked until after the deed has been committed; and it is hence avenging; but the avenging power is manifestly deficient, if it is not equal to what the preventing power would have been. It is fit that the criminal should not suffer less harm, than might have been justly inflicted to preserve the life which he has destroyed. Society estimates the life of the murdered man now, as it was bound to estimate it, if it could have interposed before the deed was consummated; and it does, though late, and for the preservation of other lives, what it would have been just to do, for the preservation of the life which it was unable to protect.

OBJECTION 1.—The decalogue expressly commands, "Thou shalt not kill," and this law binds society, as well as individuals.

We admit that the decalogue, though given to the Israelites, is binding on all men; but if the precept, "Thou shalt not kill," was, to the Israelites, a general law, admitting limitations and exceptions, it must be so to other men. God, who gave them the precept, expressly commanded them to kill the wicked inhabitants

of Canaan; and, in numerous cases, required that the punishment of death should be inflicted on their own countrymen, for violation of the law which he had given them. If capital punishment was consistent with the precept then, it must be consistent now.

**OBJECTION 2.**—Society cannot change the relations between men. The executioner is a man, and the murderer is a fellow-man, a neighbor whom he is bound to love. Society cannot change the relation, nullify the obligation, and authorize the doing of harm instead of good.

The argument of this objection will prove too much. It will decide against all punishments as well as against capital punishment. A man has no right to fine, whip, or imprison his neighbor; and therefore, according to the argument, society cannot authorize its officers to inflict these penalties. Now, since society cannot act as a whole, except by its officers, it will follow that society cannot inflict any penalty, and that government must cease. Premises which justify such a conclusion must contain some fallacy.

The assumption that society cannot change the relations between men needs limitation. Changes do take place in human relations, and society is frequently concerned in effecting them. Marriage and divorce change the relations between the parties; and these changes, if legally made, require the aid and authority of society. When society appoints a civil ruler, it changes the relation between him and the other members of the community. The relation between an executioner and a murderer is not the simple relation which subsists between man and man; but has been modified, partly by society, and partly by the criminal. Society, by appointing the officer, has given him a new relation to every member of the community; and the criminal, by

his violation of law, has changed his relation to every member of the community. When a man, to preserve his own life, takes the life of an assailant, he does not act towards him in the simple relation of man to man. The assailant puts himself in the relation of a wild beast. He who has committed murder has made himself a wild beast in relation to the community as a whole; and the executioner, by the relation which society has instituted, is the point of contact where this wild beast and the power of society come in conflict. Such a change in the relation of the parties must be supposed when an officer fines, whips, or imprisons a criminal; and the change will equally justify the infliction of the death-penalty, if the criminal deserves it.

OBJECTION 3.—The purpose of protecting society might be accomplished by confining the criminal; and benevolence requires that punishment should be inflicted for the reformation of guilty men, not for their unnecessary destruction.

That the protection of society may be accomplished by confining the criminal, is an assumption that cannot be admitted without proof. The repetition of injury from the same individual may be prevented by this means: but society needs a shield to protect it from the first injury, as well as the second; and from all evil-minded persons, as well as from the individual whom it has succeeded in arresting for crime already committed. This shield is supplied when rulers are “a terror to evil-doers;” and to render them terrible, the wisdom of God has placed *the sword* in their hands. It cannot be supposed that imprisonment, with bountiful maintenance, kind treatment, and benevolent effort to effect a reformation can present as great terror to evil-doers as the death-penalty. Hence, if this penalty is abolished,

the divinely-appointed shield for the protection of society is thrown away.

When appeals to benevolence are made in behalf of criminals, it ought not to be forgotten that the virtuous members of the community have at least equal claim to our benevolence. Forbearance and tenderness towards the guilty are not benevolence, if they multiply injuries, and expose the virtuous to evils from which society ought to protect them. Civil society is instituted for the protection of rights; and the design of the institution will be frustrated, if the protection of rights be sacrificed to the claims of a spurious benevolence, which removes needful restraints from the wicked.

OBJECTION 4.—The execution of criminals tends to multiply crimes, rather than prevent them. The multitude who gaze at the spectacle contemplate the culprit as the hero of the occasion, and are affected more with sympathy for him than with abhorrence of his crime, or dread of its penalty.

If all that is assumed in this objection were admitted, the practical inference would be that executions ought not to be public. The question, whether they ought to be public or private, is wholly distinct from the question whether capital punishment is lawful. It may be a sufficient argument against the publicity of executions, if only a few of the spectators are affected in the manner described in the objection; but that, in general, they who witness the scene are less averse than before to commit capital crime, may be safely denied.

#### SECTION IV. WAR.

THE power of the sword would be of but little avail to the civil magistrate, if it were restricted to the infliction of punishment on those who have been apprehended, tried, and condemned. Government cannot be

maintained without power to bring the violators of law to trial. They will not present themselves voluntarily in the courts of justice; and they cannot be brought by the mere influence of moral motives. Physical power is indispensable; and if government cannot use physical power, its operations may be effectually resisted, by any band of lawless men who may choose to combine against it. And this physical force must include the power of the sword. Were the power of government so restricted, that it must always, in suppressing insurrection and bringing the guilty to justice, abstain from shedding blood, gangs of depredators would establish their fortresses in the midst of the community, and sally forth with the arms of war, whenever they choose, to murder and plunder the peaceful citizens. The civil ruler who should brandish a reed before them, instead of being a terror to evil-doers, would be compelled to retire from the unequal contest. Iniquity, armed with weapons of death, would never yield to laws which could not be enforced with the power of the sword.

In an intelligent and virtuous community, the execution of the laws seldom requires an exertion of physical strength. The disturbers of public order are too few to hope that resistance of law could be successful. The unarmed officer, perhaps emaciated with disease, lays his hand on the sturdy culprit; and, overawed, he yields submissively, and follows to prison, to await his trial. Why is this? The military power of the country sleeps behind this emaciated and feeble officer; and the culprit knows that his whisper would awaken a host against which all resistance would be vain. This is the secret of his mysterious tameness. This secret influence, as a magic spell, attends the officers of justice everywhere; and without it they would, like Samson shorn of his locks, be as other men. Judges and jurors



might announce their decisions from the courts of justice; but they would be as ineffectual to secure the rights of individuals, and the order of the community, as a proclamation issued by a crowd casually assembled in a market-place. The legislative assemblies might publish their statutes; but they would go forth with as little power to control the actions of men, as a paragraph of a newspaper. Government, however peacefully administered, is established on military power; and, if this foundation be removed, the superstructure, if it could retain its form for a time, must be overthrown by the first tempest of insurrection.

If the power of the sword may be used to suppress an insurrection of citizens, much more may it be used to repel an invasion of foreign enemies. If the life of a citizen murderer may be taken by the infliction of capital punishment, no sufficient reason can be assigned why the lives of foreign murderers should be spared. Government is established to protect the rights of the citizens; and the sword is put into the hands of civil rulers for this purpose by the highest authority in the universe. It must, therefore, be right for government to use this instrument, when necessary, against all who oppose the peace and order of the community, whether they be citizens or foreigners. The power of the sword must include the power of waging necessary war.

The power of waging war, like that of imprisoning, or of inflicting capital punishment, belongs to the government, and not to the individual citizens; and, for the right exercise of it, the government is responsible. All these powers may be abused; and gross abuses of them by wicked governments have greatly multiplied the miseries of mankind. The innocent have often been shut up in dungeons, or cruelly put to death by public authority; and ambitious chieftains have ex-

tended the ravages of war through unoffending countries; spreading everywhere terror, desolation, and death. For all these abuses of power, the rulers are responsible; and the citizens also are responsible, so far as they appoint and sustain such rulers; but we must not, to guard against such abuses, refuse to appoint any civil rulers; or refuse to invest them, when appointed, with the powers necessary to sustain the government. Great as have been the miseries which mankind have suffered from abuse of these powers, the world, without any civil government, would have exhibited a scene of still greater miseries. The power of imprisoning, and the power of the sword, are both necessary to the support of government; and, therefore, to the peace, order, and happiness of the community: but the public welfare, and the interests of private citizens, require that these powers should be committed to none but virtuous hands.

The Holy Scriptures furnish proof that war may be lawful. God's ancient people waged numerous wars by express divine command; and the pen of inspiration has commended valor in battle as a virtue:<sup>1</sup> and David gratefully acknowledged his military skill to be a gift from God.<sup>2</sup> A Roman military officer, having soldiers under him, was commended by Jesus Christ, as a most illustrious example of faith, without any exception being made to his military office.<sup>3</sup> Another Roman

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<sup>1</sup> Judges vi. 12; Ps. lx. 12; Heb. xi. 34.    <sup>2</sup> Ps. cxliv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. viii. 9, 10. It has been objected to this argument that the silence of Christ would equally justify the idolatry of which this heathen centurion had doubtless been guilty. But he was not now an idolater; and he did not present himself to Christ as such. He did present himself as a military officer in the words "having soldiers under me." If to these words he had added, *and I worship*

captain received special notice from heaven, and had the honor conferred on him of being the first uncircumcised convert to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> But no intimation was given that the holding of a military commission was unacceptable to the Head of the church. But we have stronger proof from Scripture than that of mere silence. The forerunner of Christ was divinely commissioned to make ready a people for the Lord. Among those whom he baptized, were soldiers who desired him to instruct them in their duty. If the military service is unlawful, it was their duty to abandon it; and it was John's duty to instruct them to this effect. But, on the contrary, he commanded, "Be content with your wages."<sup>2</sup> It would have been dishonest for them to receive wages, and not perform the service for which the wages were given. It is clear, therefore, that the Baptist's instructions implied the lawfulness of their continuing to serve as soldiers. And if Christian men might lawfully be captains and soldiers under tyrannical Roman emperors, much more is it lawful to render military service under Christian rulers.

OBJECTION 1.—Natural religion condemns war, because it lessens the amount of human happiness. Revelation decides that war proceeds from criminal lusts;<sup>3</sup> and its moral character must agree with that of the passions from which it originates.

Some persons have maintained that war, if not too frequent or too long protracted, promotes national prosperity, by cutting off a gangrenous species of population, and awakening patriotism, energies, and talents,

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*the gods of my country*, the objection before us would have been valid. But who can believe that, in this case, the Saviour would have commended him without excepting his idolatry?

<sup>1</sup> Acts ch. x.

<sup>2</sup> Luke iii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> James iv. 1.

which would otherwise have remained inactive and useless. Our present purpose does not require that we should enter into a discussion of this subject. The miseries of war are many and great. It is an evil, a sore evil, and we prefer to admit the worst that may be said concerning its pernicious influence on human happiness. But what shall be the remedy for the evil? Shall we, to prevent a nation from suffering the calamities of war, deny to it the power of waging war? It is a revolting spectacle when two boxers meet and mangle each other's bodies for a wager; but shall we, to prevent the evil, deprive them of their physical strength? The power of the sword is as necessary to the strength of a government as muscular power is to the strength of the physical frame. The power has been sadly abused, as muscular power also has been; but to prevent the abuse by destroying the power, is as if we would prevent the crimes of mankind by annihilating the race. God has given men powers capable of abuse, and holds them responsible for their proper exercise. This is his plan of moral discipline, and we contravene his plan if we take from the hand of the civil magistrate the sword which God has put into it. We must not abolish capital punishment because tyrants have abused the power of inflicting it, and have cut off men's heads in sport. We must not abolish physical strength because boxers have abused it to batter each others' bodies. And we must not abolish the war-making power because wicked rulers have abused it, and have by means of it greatly multiplied human woes. Virtue promotes human happiness, not by annihilating the power to do mischief, but by rectifying the disposition.

War, like capital punishment, can have no other necessity than that which arises from the crimes and

evil passions of men. In every war, one at least of the parties must be guilty of wrong, and responsible for the horrible consequences. Nations are composed, for the most part, of wicked men; and the wars which blacken the pages of history, have been wicked wars. Our present purpose does not require that we should attempt to justify them, or extenuate their enormities. We inquire not whether the war-making power has been rightly used by wicked men, but whether it is possible to use it virtuously. Our forefathers, who engaged in the War of the American Revolution, were imperfect men; and, with the motives which prompted their actions, we may admit that impure passions were mingled; but who will maintain that they offended God and sinned against the interests of mankind, when they gave their blood to establish liberty in the land, and maintain the principles of liberty to which, in the face of the world, they pledged their lives? If Joshua, and the Israelites whom he led into Canaan, can be justified for the wars which they waged, on the ground that they acted by Divine command, Washington and his compatriots may be justified, on the ground that Divine Providence manifestly called them to the bloody struggle for the benefit of future generations.

OBJECTION 2.—Although wars were waged by Divine command under the Old Testament dispensation, the Christian dispensation is characterized by peace. Christ is called the “Prince of Peace;”<sup>1</sup> his birth was announced with the declaration, “On earth peace;”<sup>2</sup> and when his religion shall spread through the world, prophecy gives assurance that war will cease.<sup>3</sup> The precepts of Christ expressly enjoin forgiveness of injuries, and forbid men to avenge themselves by doing harm to others.

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<sup>1</sup> Isa. ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. ii. 4.

Christianity will abolish war, capital punishment, and imprisonment, by abolishing crime, not by denying to government the power to punish it. Nations will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, when all the people are righteous, and the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth, as the waters do the sea. But, until that happy day arrives, the wicked will do wickedly, and will need to be restrained by civil power. The religion of Christ is eminently pacific, and teaches that we ought, if possible, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men; but it does not create a possibility of universal peace, while wickedness abounds. The mission of Christ into the world was designed to make peace between God and men; and it will ultimately diffuse peace over the earth; but this was not its immediate effect. He said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword."<sup>1</sup> While crimes and injuries continue, the civil magistrate has his duty to perform; and Christianity does not release him from the obligation, or paralyze his arm. It teaches men to love their neighbors; but this morality, though more fully unfolded in the gospel, was an essential principle of the Mosaic law. Even the sublime duty of doing good to enemies, was enforced in the old dispensation,<sup>2</sup> at the very time that wars were waged by divine command. What was consistent then, must be consistent now.

OBJECTION 3.—Governments cannot change the relations which subsist between men. The armies which meet in hostile array, consist of men whom God has made of one blood, and whom he has commanded to love one another; and human governments cannot make it their duty to kill one another.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxv. 21.

The assumption that governments cannot change the relations which subsist between men, was examined in its application to the relation between an executioner and a murderer, who is about to be hanged. In this case, the human government does not require its officer to disobey God; but the whole proceeding has the divine sanction; and this is equally true in the case of a just and necessary war, waged by an injured and oppressed people, in the protection of their rights, and for the preservation of their lives. It is not necessary, in order to answer the objection, that we should attempt to justify unjust or unnecessary wars; but if a single case of justifiable war has existed, or can even be supposed, the objection fails.

OBJECTION 4.—War, instead of securing the rights of any people, multiplies aggressions. Justice and kindness to all, will command the respect and approbation of all, and will insure protection more effectually than armies and navies. No nation in Europe could be led to battle against an innocent and unoffending people, known to be without warlike preparations, and unwilling to take arms.

The founders of Pennsylvania entertained the views presented in this objection, and chose to expose themselves to the hostility of American savages, rather than arm themselves for defence. The success of their policy has often been urged as an argument for its universal adoption. But the colony of Bassa Cove, established in Liberia, on the same principles, by the Pennsylvania Colonization Society, was almost annihilated by the neighboring tribes, whose attacks were invited by its defencelessness; and it owed its preservation ultimately to the military preparations of neighboring colonies. A single example like this, demonstrates the impolicy, not to say the guilt, of neglecting to

provide necessary means of defence. In the ordinary administration of government, the civil magistrate very rarely finds it necessary to use the sword against the citizens; yet a wise people will have him armed with it; and there is not a nation in Europe, whose citizens would feel safe from their fellow-citizens, if the power of the sword were taken from the hands of the rulers. If this power is necessary to protect citizens of the same nation from each other, much more is it necessary to protect them from neighboring nations. The supposition that a nation is safer for being without a protecting government, is a delusive fancy, and were it true, all civil government ought to be abolished; and then the intercourse, not only of nations with nations, but also of citizens with citizens, would be rendered more just, because the rights of all would be without protection.

OBJECTION 5.—The precepts of the gospel, and the example of the first Christians, teach us to suffer patiently what the providence of God may bring upon us, and not to fight against wrong. Christianity gained its conquests by martyrdom, and not by carnal weapons.

The first Christians obeyed the precepts of the gospel, when they submitted to the powers that be, even while suffering oppression from them; and when they committed to civil government the protection of their persons and rights against individuals. In all this they acknowledged civil government to be an ordinance of God, and honored the divine institution. Paul procured the protection of a Roman officer against the forty conspirators who sought his life, and accepted a military escort to save him from their malice.<sup>1</sup> He did not herein distrust the providence of God, but dutifully

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiii. 17-31.



employed the means of defence which that providence had furnished for his protection. His religion was not a fatalism which chose to suffer death, rather than invoke the protection which could be granted only by military power.

#### SECTION V. SLAVERY.<sup>1</sup>

##### *May be necessary.*

GOVERNMENT rightfully possesses the power to restrict the liberty of individuals, when it is necessary to prevent injury. Difficulty may arise in determining the cases to which this power ought to be applied, and the proper mode and extent of its application; but the right to exercise it, when necessary, can scarcely be questioned. The responsibility of protecting from injury, implies the possession of the power necessary for the purpose. An individual assaulted may, in self-defence, seize the arm of his assailant, and hold it as long as there is just ground to fear injury; and government, charged with the responsibility of protecting the citizens, cannot have less power than the citizens themselves. To deny that government has a right to exercise this power, is virtually to deny that government has a right to exist.

The case to which this power has been judged to be specially applicable, is that of an alien people, not qualified for citizenship in the community where they dwell. Forms of government which impose but little

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough investigation of this subject, I take pleasure in referring to a work of great merit, "An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America: To which is prefixed an Historical Sketch of Slavery. By Thomas B. Cobb, of Georgia."

restraint on the liberties of the people, are not adapted to rude tribes of men; and a government which extends over distinct tribes, differing widely from each other in intellectual and moral condition, ought to adapt itself to the character of each. If the tribes occupied distinct territories, a republican government might be the best adapted to one of them, and a despotism to the other. It would then be unwise, if they are brought into the same territory, to institute the same form of government for them both. Hence, when two such tribes are in the providence of God brought together, wisdom and justice require that the government which is spread over them, and which more or less restricts the natural liberty of all, should make these restrictions greater for the less improved tribe, than for the other.<sup>1</sup>

All government is a bond. We call a government free, when the bondage which it imposes, is the least possible that can preserve peace and order in a highly civilized community. In despotic governments, the people have been the *δουλοι*, *slaves*, of the monarch, who, in many cases, has had the power to put them to death at his pleasure. This is most abject slavery.

An alien tribe may be placed in a separate portion of the territory; and may, as a whole, be under the direct restraint of government. So the Israelites in Egypt were placed in the land of Goshen, and were

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<sup>1</sup> "The best form of government for any people is *the best that its present moral and social condition renders practicable*. A people may be so entirely surrendered to the influence of passion, and so feebly influenced by moral restraint, that a government which relied upon moral restraint could not exist for a day. In this case, a subordinate and inferior principle yet remains—the *principle of fear*; and the only resort is to a government of force, or a military despotism."—*Wayland's Moral Science*, p. 354.

under task-masters,<sup>1</sup> appointed over them by the king. This is political slavery. In other cases, the alien people have been distributed through the community, and have been divided among the families, in a relation of subjection to the head of the family, as their master. This is domestic slavery. The master, in this arrangement, like the task-master in the former, derives his authority from the government; and the slave is kept in subjection to him by the power of the government. In this view, he is a civil officer, and has sometimes possessed the power of life and death over the slaves, like the supreme ruler in a despotic government.

In domestic slavery, the common method of distributing the alien people among the families of the community, has been by sale. The master, by purchase, becomes the proprietor of his slave. This relation modifies that of task-master, or civil despot; and the incorporation of the slave into the family, gives a favorable opportunity for the formation and exercise of similar affections, to those which appropriately belong to the parental and filial relations. The master becomes the friend and protector of his slave; and kindness on the one part, and fidelity on the other, have often marked the relation—and would always attend it, if the parties were duly virtuous. In these particulars, domestic slavery has an advantage, in respect of benevolence, over bondage in the other form.

When men are imprisoned for crime, government claims the right of requiring that they shall labor—as in the case of our penitentiaries. The right to make this requirement, applies equally to slaves. Governments are maintained at expense; and a despotic government, in which strong military force is needed, requires

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. i. 11.

more expense than a free government; and hence, a rude people must pay more for being governed, than a people who need less restraint. It would be unjust for an alien people to enjoy all the benefits of a government to which they are not adapted, at the expense of the intelligent and polished people who have instituted it for themselves. And, moreover, were such a people not required to labor, the restraint on their personal liberty, which their condition requires, could not readily be imposed; and the power of government would need to be exercised in some other way, less favorable to their good, and to the public peace. If that condition seems unequal, it should be remembered that the arrangements of Providence have always rendered the condition of the intelligent and refined more advantageous than that of the ignorant and rude. If it be said that benevolence ought to assign to them a position in society above that to which they are adapted, the reply is, that civil governments were not instituted to dispense benevolence, but to protect rights. Benevolence is an individual, rather than a political virtue. Civil government cannot undertake to effect a change in the character and habits of the slaves; and to place them in a higher position, without adapting them to it, would not be benevolence, either to them or to the community.

The power of the sword, whether over citizens or aliens, extends to both life and liberty. Over citizens, it affects life by capital punishment, and liberty by imprisonment. Over aliens, it affects life by war, and liberty by subjugation or slavery. As the power of governments became exercised with more mildness, imprisonment was substituted, in many cases, for capital punishment; and slavery, for exterminating war. Without doubt slavery often originated in wars which were

unjust and cruel ; but it was an abatement of their cruelty.

*Who must judge.*

We have seen that it may be necessary to restrict personal liberty, for the sake of protecting rights, and securing order in the community ; and that the power of restricting belongs to government. Government is an agent of society ; and the right to judge when government should so restrict personal liberty, belongs properly to society. Like the power to take vengeance, it does not belong to individuals ; and the individual who enslaves a fellow-man, is a “ man stealer,”<sup>1</sup> in the language of Scripture, and violates moral obligation.

The governments of society have frequently been less free than the character of the people required ; and a degree of bondage has been imposed, which was not necessary for public good. But, notwithstanding the errors which may have been committed, the right to organize its government belongs to society ; and, therefore, society must judge in what cases personal liberty ought to be restricted, and the proper mode and extent of the restriction.

*Relation of Master.*

From what has been said, it is manifest that no man can justly claim from society the unrestricted enjoyment of personal liberty. A well-regulated society will not impose unnecessary restrictions, and will protect the right from the encroachment of individuals. But, as each individual is bound to yield his personal liberty to the necessary restrictions which society may impose, so he is bound to respect such restrictions, when imposed

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 10.

on others. The individual who forcibly enslaves a free man, is guilty of a crime against society, as well as against the individual enslaved. When the regulations of society have put a man in the condition of a slave, he who sustains to him the relation of master, is not chargeable with criminal violation of personal liberty, and is not bound to emancipate him. A military commander has no right to release a soldier from the restraints of military service; a jailor has no right to release from confinement a prisoner whom society has committed to his charge; and, on the same principle, a master violates his obligation to society, if he emancipates one who, according to the regulations of society, ought to be held in bondage.

In opposition to the conclusion which we have reached, many persons maintain that the holding of slaves is sinful; and that masters are therefore under moral obligation to emancipate them. This question is one of great practical importance to conscientious Christian masters in the southern portion of the United States, where slavery is established by law.

It has been shown that a state, consisting of persons qualified for a high degree of civil liberty, if it has in its midst an alien people who are not thus qualified, and whose unrestricted freedom would be injurious to the peace and happiness of the community, has a right to hold them in bondage by military force. This right our Federal Constitution appears to recognise fully as belonging to the states of our Union; nearly half of the states now exercise it, and others have claimed and exercised it in time past, where slavery has since been abolished. If this right of a state be admitted, argument is scarcely needed to prove that individual citizens, under whose custody the social regulations have placed the enslaved people, may lawfully hold them in the

relation which these regulations have established. The will of the society needs to be obeyed, unless it can be shown to be contrary to the will of God; and, to learn the will of God on the subject, our best appeal is to the Holy Scriptures.

In the first book of the Bible the origin of slavery is thus recorded: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."<sup>1</sup> This curse was denounced by the patriarch Noah, because of a crime committed by his son Ham, the father of Canaan; and it was probably recorded in part for the encouragement of the Israelites in their wars against the descendants of Canaan. The curse of Ham's transgression fell heavily on the Canaanites; but it was not confined to this branch of his family. The enslaved negroes in our midst are his descendants, and their condition agrees with this ancient prediction. The fact that the slavery of Ham's descendants was predicted, does not prove that the enslaving of them was right; for the crucifixion of Christ was predetermined in the counsels of God, and foretold by ancient prophets; and yet the agents in effecting it were held guilty for the act, which they are said to have perpetrated with "wicked hands."<sup>2</sup> But the words of Noah are more than a mere prediction. They are a denunciation of God's displeasure at the sin of Ham, and an explanation of the degradation which has fallen on his posterity.

As the sons of Adam are bound to submit patiently to the curse which requires them to earn their bread in the sweat of their face, so the sons of Ham are bound to submit patiently to the curse which has doomed them to bondage. To the sons of Adam, who come into the world depraved, the labor, which the curse

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. ix. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 23.

denounced, is in fact a blessing; and its beneficial effects on the fallen race demonstrate that the offended Judge in the midst of wrath remembered mercy. So the bondage which Ham's descendants endure in our land is overruled by the wisdom and benevolence of Providence to their good. An alleviation of the curse which has fallen on them consists in the adaptedness of their mental constitution to endure the degradation of slavery; and they have, therefore, been preserved from the waste and prospective annihilation to which the Indian tribes of America have been subjected. The Africans have multiplied in their slavery; have been better provided for than they would have been in the land of their forefathers; have been protected from the tyranny of oppressive kings, and the miseries of desolating wars; and, above all, have been brought under the influence of the gospel, in circumstances far more favorable to their civilization and evangelization than heathen nations generally enjoy.

But these benefits, it may be said, were not contemplated by those who enslaved them. Granted; but they ought to be contemplated by every wise and benevolent friend of the African race. He may learn from the prophetic curse denounced by Noah, that their slavery is a part of the mysterious plan according to which God is governing the world; and he will be careful not rashly to oppose this plan, lest haply he be found fighting against God. The benevolent design of Providence in bringing the sons of Africa into bondage in the United States, is too manifest to be misinterpreted. It may be regarded as a stupendous missionary movement, accomplishing more in the evangelizing of the heathen than all the missionary operations of Christian churches throughout the world. Let no man oppose this movement by forbidding the holding of



slaves, until he can produce divine authority for the prohibition.

The book of Genesis presents a further account of slavery in the history of Abraham, the friend of God, and father of the faithful. This great and good man was commanded to circumcise the servants born in his house, and bought with money;<sup>1</sup> and, in the solemn covenant transaction in which this command was given, there is no intimation that the existence of slavery in his family was displeasing to God. What was the precise extent of Abraham's power over these servants, we have not the means of knowing. In many countries the power of life and death has been held by kings over their subjects, and by masters over their slaves. If one of Abraham's servants had perpetrated a crime worthy of death, what would have been the process of his trial and condemnation, we know not; but we know that the patriarch so far claimed a right over the lives of his servants that he employed them to the number of three hundred and eighteen<sup>2</sup> in military service against the five kings that invaded the country which he inhabited.

Numerous passages of the Old Testament contain historic references to slavery. In the law given by Moses, it was expressly provided that the Hebrews might take to themselves bond-men from the neighboring heathen nations;<sup>3</sup> and in the decalogue, designed for universal and perpetual obligation, the relation of master and servant is as clearly recognised as that of husband and wife, or of parent and child; and the master's right of property in his servant is not only recognised, but also protected even against covetousness.<sup>4</sup>

In the New Testament we have frequent allusions to

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvii. 13. <sup>2</sup> Gen. xiv. 14. <sup>3</sup> Lev. xxv. 44. <sup>4</sup> Ex. xii. 10, 17.

slavery, without any prohibition of it, or intimation of its unlawfulness. The Roman centurion, whose faith Jesus commended in the words, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,"<sup>1</sup> was a slaveholder, as appears from the words, "My servant (slave) lieth at home sick of the palsy."<sup>2</sup> The Roman laws invested the master with the power of life and death over his slaves; and the fact that this centurion held slaves under this law did not, in the estimation of the Saviour, render him unworthy of the high commendation which was bestowed on him, and which has been recorded for our instruction. If the holding of slaves is sinful, it would have been a suitable occasion for our Lord when commending this slaveholder so highly, to have instructed his disciples to avoid imitation of him in this particular. But he gave no such caution; and, further, no such caution can be found anywhere in the New Testament.

Slaves are, in the New Testament, commanded to obey their masters, as an act of obedience to God, just as children are commanded to obey their parents, and subjects to obey their rulers.<sup>3</sup> Among the masters who were to be obeyed, some are called "believing masters," and these were to be accounted "worthy of all honor."<sup>4</sup> It is hence clear that there were slaveholders in the apostolic churches, and that these men, in view of the relation which they held as masters, were, by apostolic instruction, to be accounted worthy, not of reproach and excommunication, but of honor. It deserves to be remarked that Paul has added to his instructions on this point these significant words: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii. 5-13. <sup>2</sup> Matt. viii. 6, compared with verse 9, and Luke vii. 2, 3, 8, 10, in which places the more definite word *δουλος* is used. <sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 5-9; Col. iii. 22-25. <sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing."<sup>1</sup>

The Scriptures furnish a yet stronger argument for the lawfulness of slaveholding, in the fact that they instruct masters how to exercise authority over their slaves.<sup>2</sup> If the relation of master were unlawful, to instruct them how to exercise the authority of master, would be to instruct them how to sin. The Scriptures nowhere instruct us in what manner we ought to commit idolatry, perjury, adultery, theft, or extortion. They nowhere tell those who, in violation of the matrimonial law, live in unchaste intercourse with each other, how they must act towards each other in the unlawful relation which they have assumed. The mode of Scriptural instruction in all such cases is, "Let him that stole steal no more."<sup>3</sup> So, if the holding of slaves were unlawful, the command would have been, "Cease from the sin of slaveholding; at once emancipate your slaves." It may be objected that this would have disturbed the arrangements of society, and excited so great prejudice against the gospel, as to obstruct its progress. And what then? Did the apostles of Christ make compromise with sin that the gospel might spread without obstruction? But, say some, they thought it wiser to leave the principles of the gospel to extirpate slavery gradually, than to attempt its immediate extirpation by commanding universal emancipation. If so, we ought to imitate their example. They tore up the very foundations of heathen society, and turned the world upside down, by preaching that men should abandon idolatry, and all vice, and repent and turn to God; but they tolerated slavery for the time at least;

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.    <sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 9; Col. iv. 1.    <sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 28.

admitted slaveholders into the churches, and taught them how to act the part of masters, without intimating to them at what time, or in what circumstances emancipation should be effected. The conclusion is unavoidable that the wisdom from above, by which the apostles acted, did not account the holding of slaves sinful.

Another step in the argument still remains. As if in foresight of the disquietudes which the slavery question has engendered, a very brief epistle, containing little else than an apostolic decision of the question, has been preserved, and now constitutes a part of the sacred canon. Onesimus, an unconverted slave, ran away from his Christian master Philemon; and, in a distant country, was converted under the preaching of Paul. In this case, the question was presented for the apostle's decision, whether the absent master had a right to the services of his fugitive slave. If no such right exists, the servant was, of right, free; and, being now far from the master's power, no command to emancipate him was necessary, and no disturbance to society would have been caused by permitting him to enjoy his freedom. Paul has said to slaves, "If thou mayest be made free, use it rather;"<sup>1</sup> and, since Onesimus was now in fact free, if it had been right for him to continue free, the apostle would have decided that he ought to prefer freedom, and not return again to bondage. Why, then, did he send him back to the bondage from which he had fled? and why has this brief epistle, containing the apostle's decision of the question, been transmitted to us, as a part of the Holy Scriptures, for our instruction in righteousness? In the few lines of this inspired

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 21. The interpretation which supposes the pronoun "it" to stand for the noun *bondage*, does not appear to me to give the true sense of this passage.

letter, the small still voice of God comes down to us, through the lapse of centuries, commanding the tumults of the slavery agitation to cease; and directing us to admit the rights of the master, and appeal to his benevolence for any improvement in the condition of his slave.<sup>1</sup>

The arguments on the other side of the question will now be considered.

**ARGUMENT 1.**—The passages of Scripture which have been quoted, speak of servants, not of slaves; and, therefore, give no countenance to slavery.

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<sup>1</sup> The following extracts from Scott's Commentary, give a correct view of the design and import of this epistle.

"When the apostle was imprisoned at Rome, Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, having, as it is generally thought, been guilty of some dishonesty, left his master and fled to that city, though at the distance of several hundred miles. When he came thither, curiosity, or some similar motive, induced him to attend on St. Paul's ministry, which it pleased God to bless for his conversion. After he had given very satisfactory proof of a real change, and manifested an excellent disposition by his suitable behavior, which had greatly endeared him to the apostle, he judged it proper to send him back to his master, to whom he wrote this epistle, in order to procure Onesimus a more favorable reception than he otherwise could have expected.

"Onesimus' signifies *profitable*; in allusion to which the apostle allowed that he had not formerly deserved that name, having been 'unprofitable;' . . . so that he was become 'profitable,' both to Philemon and the apostle. He was prepared to be a useful servant to the former.

"Onesimus was Philemon's legal property; and St. Paul had required and prevailed with Onesimus to return to him . . . . He would gladly have kept him at Rome, to minister to him in his confinement, which Onesimus would willingly have done . . . But he would not do anything of this kind without his [Philemon's] consent . . . . He knew that Philemon would no longer consider Onesimus merely as a slave, but view him as 'above a slave,' even as a brother beloved."

The Scriptures speak of hired servants, and also of bond-servants, bond-men, or slaves. The latter class of servants is intended, in all the passages relied on in the preceding arguments, as appears from the words employed in the Greek text, and especially from the word *δουλος*, which signifies definitely *a slave, one who serves at the will of another*.

ARGUMENT 2.—In slavery men are treated as brutes. Brutes may be made subservient to the happiness of their owners: but slaves are men—and all men have a right to use their bodies and minds for the promotion of their own happiness. Slavery invests the master with the right to govern the minds and bodies of as many as he can, by purchase, bring under his power, and to use them for the promotion of his happiness, in disregard of their interests for time and eternity. These considerations prove slavery to be unlawful.

Human beings have, in common with brutes, bodies which are capable of performing labor, and which need food for their support, and shelter for defence from cold and storm. The righteous man will regard the life of his beast; and, while he requires its labor, will not overtask it, and will give it the needed food and shelter. It may be benevolent for him to extend like treatment to a poor fellow-man, to whom it may be a great favor to give food, raiment, and comfortable habitation, to himself, his wife, and children, in return for his labor. If this were all that is intended, when it is said that slaves are treated as brutes, the comparison, so well calculated to bring odium on slavery, would be harmless.

But it is said that the master may require the service of his slaves, for the promotion of his own happiness exclusively, and in disregard of their interests for time and eternity. This may be equally true, and is equally

reprehensible, when men employ a poor laborer from day to day, for their own convenience and advantage, in disregard of his interests. The poor man's life may be spent in labor for them, and his strength exhausted by their oppressive exactions, as effectually as if he were a slave. Masters are bound to give to their slaves that which is equal, and to promote their interests for time and eternity. They may neglect their duty, as fathers may neglect their duty to their children; but the relation which a master sustains, binds him to the duty; and in this respect compares favorably with the relation which the employer holds to the poor laborer whose services he receives for stipulated wages. The neglect of the master, like the neglect of the father, is no valid argument against the lawfulness of the relation.

To whatever corner of the earth, or page of its history, we turn our eyes, we shall see misery abounding. Sin has filled the world with woe. Evil-doers have rendered it necessary that the power of the sword should restrain them; and when the sword has been held by wicked hands, the heart of humanity sickens at the thought of the sorrows which have been endured. Ambitious conquerors have drenched the earth with blood, and cruel tyrants have wrung the hearts of their subjects with anguish. The seemingly peaceful arrangement by which property is divided among its owners, becomes the occasion, even in a land so blest as ours, of fraud and extortion. The man of wealth buys, at the least possible price, the services of his poor neighbor, in unfeeling disregard of his interests, and with far less concern for the wife and children dependent on the wages received, than for the horses which draw his splendid carriage. It is not slavery, but human depravity, which treats men as brutes. They who purchase

the life-time service of a poor man, day by day, may as effectually brutalize him, as he who purchases it at once, and when sickness and old age come upon him, instead of providing for him as if he were a slave, may leave him to die unpitied as a brute.

If all the relations in human society, which have been the occasions of crime and suffering, were to be banished from the world, not one would be left, and it would be necessary for God to reform the whole system of his government over the world. But the wisdom of his system must not be estimated by man's abuse of it. Men to whose hands the sword of government has been intrusted, are powers ordained of God *for good*.<sup>1</sup> Their authority, when exercised according to the will of God, is a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well. Such authority in the hands of David, made him a blessing to ancient Israel; and such authority in the hands of Washington, made him the deliverer and father of his country. So the proper exercise of a master's authority blesses his slaves. He receives the aliens, and makes them of his household, treating them, not as brutes, but rather as sons. He protects them from fraud and violence, provides for their wants, teaches them, by wise and kind discipline, habits of industry, as useful to themselves as to him, and instructs them in the way to heaven. Such a master is indeed "worthy of all honor."

ARGUMENT 3.—The services of the day-laborer are purchased with his consent; but the slave has never consented to the authority which his master claims. All just government derives its powers from the consent of the governed; and, therefore, that of a master over his slaves is without right.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1-4.



The day-laborer would not consent to toil for his scanty wages, if he had free access to the store-house of his opulent neighbor; but if he takes the bread which another man has hoarded up, he is charged with theft, and punished by law; and if he resists the execution of the law, it is at the peril of his life. He consents to toil, therefore, because he fears the sword which hangs over him. The slave consents to toil, because he fears the rod. Neither of them has consented to put the sword or the rod into the hand of him who wields it; and society does not ask the consent of either. The arrangements of society for the distribution of property and power, were made before either of them was born. If no government can be just but that which has the consent of the individual governed, all coercion will be unrighteous; and all restraint on evil-doers will be a violation of their rights.

ARGUMENT 4.—Society cannot change the relations naturally subsisting between individuals. The African is my neighbor, my brother; and if I have no right to enslave my brother, society cannot give me a right to hold him in bondage.

This argument, if admitted, would prove too much. The sheriff, whose duty it becomes to hang a criminal, sees in that criminal a neighbor, a brother, whom he has no right to seize and hang at his pleasure. The jailor, when required to keep a fellow-man in prison, sees in him a neighbor, a brother, whom he has no right to deprive of personal liberty. The soldier, who is ordered to battle, sees brother men before him, whose blood, he, as an individual, has no right to shed. Now, if the argument is valid, the sheriff must not hang, the jailor must not detain in prison, and the soldier must not kill. But the argument is fallacious. We have shown that society has a right to inflict capital punishment, to im-

prison offenders, and to wage war. Society is not a mere abstraction, but a combination of human beings; and the rights of society must in some way appertain to the individuals composing it. If society has a right to perform an act, it cannot be wrong for any and every individual in the society to participate in it. If society has a right to command the act, some one has a right to obey. If society ordains the existence of slavery, he who opposes its existence, offends against the rights of society, as truly as he who opposes capital punishment, imprisonment, or war, which society has ordered.

ARGUMENT 5.—The precept, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” requires us to cherish as tender and delicate a respect for the right which the meanest individual possesses over the means of happiness bestowed upon him by God, as we cherish for our own right over our own means of happiness. The principle of the precept is absolutely subversive of the principle of slavery. That of the one is entire equality of right; that of the other, is the entire absorption of the rights of one in the rights of the other.

In this, which is the chief argument from the Scriptures against slavery, there is a fallacy. The extent of rights is confounded with their sacredness. The precept requires us to cherish a tender and delicate respect for the rights of the meanest individual; but it does not require us to make his rights equal in extent to our own. On the contrary, the very terms in which the argument is stated, imply that the means of happiness bestowed on him by the Creator, may not be equal to those bestowed on us. It is not true, that the principle of the precept is equality in the extent of rights; and the principle of slavery does not oppose a tender and delicate respect for the rights of the slave. The two are therefore not inconsistent with each other. A

tender and delicate respect for the rights of woman, is not inconsistent with the fact, that, whether in the married or the single state, her rights are not perfectly commensurate with those of the other sex.

The principle of slavery is not an absolute absorption of the rights of the slave in those of the master. Were this true, no master would be punishable for the murder of his slave. Slaves have their rights; and the law and public opinion, as well as the Scripture precept cited in the argument, require these rights to be respected.

ARGUMENT 6.—Another precept of Scripture enjoins, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Now, the master would not desire to be held in bondage by his slave; and, therefore, if he holds the slave in bondage, he violates this precept.

This argument will prove too much, if its application of the precept be admitted to be just. The sheriff who is about to hang a murderer, may argue, were I in the murderer’s place, I would not desire to be hung. The jailor who is about to turn the key of the prison-door, may argue, were I in the place of the prisoner, I would desire the prison-door to be left open. That cannot be a correct application of the Scripture precept, which would make these officers neglect duties so important to society; and equally wrong is its application to the case of the slave. The murderer, the imprisoned felon, and the discontented slave, may all desire that liberty should be proclaimed through the land; but the Scripture precept does not require that they should therefore be turned loose on society. It requires that we divest ourselves of selfishness, in deciding how we should act towards others. This is the manifest spirit and intent of the precept. It limits our wishes on the

one hand, and our actions on the other, to what is right and reasonable according to subsisting relations. In view of the mischiefs which would result, I ought not to desire that the murderer, the felon, and the slave, should be turned loose on society, even if I myself were the person; and therefore it is not my duty to turn such persons loose, if society has intrusted them to my charge.

ARGUMENT 7.—The influence of slavery is unfavorable to virtue, both on the master and the slave; and unfavorable also to national prosperity. From its injurious tendency, natural religion rightly infers that it is contrary to the will of God.

Relations and conditions in human life, which are in themselves lawful, frequently become the occasions of crime and consequent suffering. A wise and virtuous man prayed to God: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."<sup>1</sup> Wealth and poverty are not crimes, but they may become the occasions of crime; and if natural religion should, on Agur's authority, or that of experience, account them unfavorable to virtue, and therefore criminal in the sight of God, it would err greatly in its final conclusion.

In the Southern States a large part of the population consists of negroes, who are naturally without enterprise, indolent and improvident. Among the white inhabitants, many are wealthy planters, whose affluence enables them to live in ease and pleasure. In such a population it would be unreasonable to expect so great a prevalence of virtue as in a community where the

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

extremes of wealth and poverty are unknown. And from a community of the latter kind may be reasonably expected a larger amount of productive industry, and consequently of national prosperity. If, in comparing the States which exclude slavery with those in which it exists, less of virtue and general prosperity is found in the latter, it is unjust to account slavery the only cause, and the criminal cause, of the deficiency. Why should slavery be held responsible, rather than the diversity of population? and why should one be accounted a criminal cause, and not the other?

When natural religion would learn the moral character of slavery from its effects in the Southern States, it should inquire what would be the condition of these States, with their present population, if slavery were abolished. Would there be more virtue, more prosperity? At present, if we cannot claim full equality with our northern brethren in these particulars, we may, without immodest boasting, claim to surpass many countries on earth in which domestic slavery does not exist. Shall we infer that these countries fall below us because they have not the institution of slavery? This would be a legitimate inference, if the argument which we are considering were valid. But, without ascribing to slavery our superiority to these countries, we do attribute to it much of the virtue and prosperity with which we are blessed. Virtue and piety are not unknown among us. We have slaveholders who resemble Abraham, or Philemon, or that other slaveholder of whom Christ said, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." Not only are many slaveholders bright examples of piety, but the religion of Christ has blessed thousands of the slave population, and made them happy in their bondage as the Lord's freemen and heirs of his heavenly kingdom. With religion and virtue, we

enjoy tranquillity and prosperity beyond what could be hoped for with our present population, if our present social organization were dissolved.

In judging what our condition would be if slavery were abolished, we are not left to abstract reasoning. The effects of the Emancipation Act in the British West Indies have demonstrated that, in such a population, slavery is far more favorable to virtue and national prosperity than emancipation.<sup>1</sup> If natural religion will compare the present with the former condition of these British colonies, she may rightly infer that slavery is not contrary to the will of God.

ARGUMENT 8.—The law of Moses made effectual provision for the abolition of slavery, by commanding that a fugitive slave should not be delivered to his master. It is impossible for slavery to be continued where this law is enforced; and we have, therefore, in this precept, direct proof that the continuance of slavery is contrary to the will of God.

The law referred to reads thus: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him."<sup>2</sup> This passage, like many others in the laws of Moses, applies the singular pronoun *thou* to the Hebrew nation collectively considered. That the word is so applied in this instance, is too manifest to admit a doubt. The phrase "with thee" is inter-

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<sup>1</sup> A statement of facts on this subject may be found in the work of Mr. Cobb before referred to; and also, together with an able discussion of the slavery question, in an Essay on Liberty and Slavery, by Albert Taylor Bledsoe, LL.D., Professor of Mathematics in the University of Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxiii. 15, 16.

puted by an additional phrase "among you;" the first referring to the nation as a whole, and the second to the individuals composing it. This fact unequivocally determines the sense which the singular pronoun here obtains. Moreover, it was commanded that the fugitive slave should be permitted to choose the place of his abode, but it cannot be supposed that every individual Israelite was bound to permit fugitive slaves to quarter themselves on the grounds of his private estate at their pleasure. The phrase "in one of *thy gates* where it liketh him best," fixes the limits of his choice to an abode somewhere within the national territory; and, therefore, the pronoun "thy" is applied to the entire nation.

Let us now examine the first clause in this law—"Thou shalt not deliver to his master a slave that is escaped from his master unto thee." If the pronoun "thee" signifies the whole Hebrew nation, who is the slave that is escaped from his master unto *the Hebrew nation*? Manifestly he is a fugitive from some other nation. Among the heathen, where masters had the power of life and death, slaves were treated with cruelty. To these the land of Israel was a desirable asylum, in which they were free from oppression, and favored with opportunity to learn and practise the true religion. Such an asylum the land was constituted by virtue of the precept under consideration. But like reasons did not apply to the case of fugitives from one tribe of Israel to another; and the law was not designed for this case. The Mosaic code recognised the slaves of an Israelite as his "possession,"<sup>1</sup> his "inheritance,"<sup>2</sup> his "money;"<sup>3</sup> and it failed to protect his acknowledged rights, if it forbade them to be delivered

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxv. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xxv. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. xxi. 21.

to him, and commanded all persons to permit them to run at large, and choose their place of abode wherever it liked them best.

*Duty to Slaves.*

A civil society is under obligation to protect the rights of the citizens, for whose benefit the social organization is instituted; but it ought not to be indifferent to the rights of others. It should deal justly with all neighboring nations; and it is not less bound to deal justly with an alien tribe that may be within its territory. Though the government which it institutes is primarily designed for the citizens, yet the alien people who are necessarily brought under it, have rights which ought to be respected. Society is bound to respect these rights—1. By a just arrangement of its relation to the alien people; and 2. By a just treatment of them in this relation.

I. Society is bound to make a just arrangement of its relation to an alien people who may be within its territory.

Justice does not require that these people should be admitted to citizenship, under a government to which they are not adapted. Since governments retain much of the original patriarchal character, it may be questioned whether one tribe of men are bound to admit individuals of another tribe to citizenship, even if equally qualified with themselves. There may be considerations which render an amalgamation of races inexpedient, apart from any regard to their fitness for a like form of government. But the case admits no question, if the alien people are totally unqualified for citizenship. A government instituted for their exclusive benefit, would need strong coercive power to protect them from the aggressions of each other; and



much more is a strong coercive power over them necessary, to restrain them from aggressions on the rights of opulent neighbors. Such coercion constitutes bondage in some form; and it is better for the parties concerned, that the character and extent of that bondage should be accurately defined, according to the dictates of wisdom and justice.

In past ages, despotism has prevailed among the nations, and the general tendency has been towards oppression of the subjects; but at the present time a disposition is evinced, in many countries, to burst the shackles of their thralldom, and to establish free governments. The success of republicanism in the United States of America has doubtless contributed much to this tendency. France has felt the influence, and more than once has attempted to institute a government too free for the character of its people. England has felt its influence, and liberated her slaves in the West Indies. It is not surprising that the very country from which this influence has spread among the nations, should be strongly affected by it, and that a clamorous demand should be heard for the admission of our negro population to equal rights with the white citizens. But is the proposal wise and just? The experiments of France and England have demonstrated that the impulse in favor of liberty may be unwisely directed. In some states of our Union, where the slave population has been small, the experiment of emancipation has been tried, and the effects have not been such as to prove that universal emancipation is desirable.

The general principle to be observed in the formation of civil society, is, not to abridge the natural rights of any unnecessarily. This principle secures to every one the highest freedom which he can reasonably claim; and a wise and just statesmanship, acting on this prin-

ciple, will not impose on the African race a heavier bondage than necessity requires; and will not release them from this bondage, to their own injury and the injury of the white population.

II. Society is bound to provide that those whom it holds in bondage shall be treated with justice.

Persons who are held in bondage, though their natural rights are abridged, have still rights remaining. These it is the duty of society to define and protect. They are less in extent than those of freemen, but they are not less sacred. The masters under whose authority and care they are placed, should be required by law to respect their rights, and made liable to punishment for every act of injustice and oppression.

Civil society is not organized to dispense benevolence, or enforce the duties of benevolence. In every country, philanthropy finds opportunity to relieve the suffering, supply the needy, and elevate the degraded and dependent portions of our race; but these services to humanity it is not the prerogative of civil authority to compel. But much may be done to meliorate the condition of slaves, by establishing such relations between them and the opulent citizens of the country, as render it the interest of the latter to protect and sustain them. This is done in the system of domestic slavery, which makes the interests of the master and of the slave to a great extent identical. Hence, fewer laws to guard against oppression are necessary. So strong are the inducements to justice and kindness, that the Mosaic law authorized a presumption that the pecuniary interest of the master would prevent him from inflicting designed injury on his slave.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxi. 21.

If the laws of the state did not render the life of the slave sacred, and provide that he should be treated with kindness, and receive a maintenance, in health and in sickness, in maturity of years, and also in the helplessness of infancy, and the decrepitude of age ; his rights in all these particulars might be inferred from the relation which he sustains. An enlightened Christian community has placed him, as a perpetual minor, under the guardianship of his master. His relation, properly viewed, is a modification of that which appertains to an apprentice, or a son ; and his rights, and the master's obligations, accord with this view of the relation.

The master is not bound to render to the slave the whole proceeds of his labor. This would be to render *more* than "is equal." The master of apprentices is entitled to receive profit from their labor ; and, in every department of industry, intelligence and capital are entitled to remuneration. If the employer of day-laborers received no profit from their services, they would be turned out of employment. The master of slaves is entitled to a higher per centage of profit on their labor, because of the capital invested in their purchase, and the obligation to give perpetual maintenance. The conscientious master will be satisfied with this ; and will not seek to make greater profit by undue exaction of labor, or undue parsimony in supplying the necessaries and comforts of life.

The obligation to provide for the slave, is not limited to his animal wants. He is a moral and immortal being ; and the dependence in which he is placed, renders it an imperious and indispensable duty of the master, to give him opportunity, encouragement, and instruction necessary to secure his eternal happiness.

## SECTION VI. ABOLITIONISM.\*

*Aim and Tendency.*

In the northern parts of the United States, a strong desire prevails to abolish negro slavery throughout the Union. It is regarded as a disgrace to the country, and a deplorable political, social, and moral evil. From the pulpit, denunciations of it are frequent and loud; and numerous publications issue from the press, discussing the moral principles involved, and exciting the indignation of the people against the institution. So decided is the opposition, and so strong are the feelings which it has engendered, that religious denominations have divided on the question; and men who were accustomed, in former years, to labor together for the spread of Christianity, cannot now co-operate in the sacred cause. Political men also have engaged in the controversy; the halls of legislation are distracted with its strife; and the dissensions which it has produced, threaten the disorganization of our civil government. For many years after the adoption of our Federal Constitution, the fraternal bonds, which united the people of the great Confederacy, were strong; and the religious sympathy, which extended from the northern to the southern boundary, was undisturbed. Slavery existed, but unattended with the discord which now menaces the ruin of the country. The reform which is attempted shakes the foundations of the republic; and every lover of his country ought to examine well the aims and tendencies of the reformation.

Though slavery is the prominent subject of discussion, it is not the only evil which the reformers desire to abolish, and which their principles require them to

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\* See the note on pp. 373, 374.

oppose. Some of them have openly inscribed on their banner, "Opposition to Capital Punishment, War, and Slavery." Others have excepted capital punishment, and have confined their opposition to the other two. None have openly advocated the abolition of all imprisonment; but the fervid orator has sometimes vaguely expressed a desire to proclaim liberty through the land; and the inconsiderate multitude have applauded, without inquiring whether, in the grand jubilee, the prison-doors are to be thrown open, and the incarcerated felons disgorged upon the community. The words mean this, if taken in their full sense; and the principles advocated require it; but it is not probable that the orator or his applauding audience contemplate such a result.

The effects of the agitations which the slavery question has produced, are chiefly to be dreaded, because of the moral principle involved. Were it merely a question of interest, good men, in view of the dangers which it threatens, would lift up their voice with one accord, and require it to be settled by compromise. But conscience admits no compromise. The very virtue of the people, which is the foundation of hope for the stability of our free institutions, opposes all compromise of moral principles. What is right must be done, at whatever risk, and whatever sacrifice. On this account, it is exceedingly important to turn away from all tumult, noise, and passion; and investigate with calmness and thoroughness the moral question, by the right decision of which good men may unite their influence to the preservation of our national peace and prosperity. Such calm and thorough investigation may be justly demanded of every author who attempts to instruct the rising generation in moral science.

The very popular work of Dr. Wayland on Moral Science teaches that war and slavery are both unlawful. Concerning the former he says: "Hence, it would

seem that all wars are contrary to the revealed will of God, and that the individual has no right to commit to society, nor society to commit to government, the power to declare war. Such, I must confess, seems to me to be the will of our Creator; and hence that to all arguments brought in favor of war, it would be a sufficient answer, that God has forbidden it, and that no consequences can possibly be conceived to arise from keeping his law so terrible as those which must arise from violating it."<sup>1</sup>

In the "Comprehensive Commentary," a valuable exposition of the Holy Scriptures, the editor, referring to the chapter from which the preceding extract is taken, says, "See chapter on *Benevolence to the Injurious* in 'Wayland's Moral Science,' perhaps the only system of ethics whose author has dared to carry out the principles of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that the new ethics of this writer will have another reformation to accomplish after slavery has been abolished; and another question of uncompromising conscience to press on the attention of the American people. Thus far it has not suited the purpose of political aspirants to agitate this question, and the pulpit has been almost silent respecting it. But if war is unlawful, the Federal Constitution, which invests Congress with the power of declaring war, sanctions enormous iniquity, and ought not to bind the consciences of virtuous citizens. In defiance of its authority, and of all human law, every good man is bound to abstain from bearing arms. Considerations may be urged on the thoughtless multitude exciting opposition to those state governments which establish slavery; but, so far as these considerations involve

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<sup>1</sup> Moral Science, p. 390.

<sup>2</sup> Note on Romans, xii. 20.

moral principle, it may be shown that the same system of ethics will justify opposition to the Federal Government in the exercise of the war-making power, in which its whole strength essentially consists.

Dr. Wayland maintains the lawfulness of imprisonment and capital punishment, but he considers the latter indefensible by the teachings of natural law, and rests the defence of it on the words of Scripture, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." We admit the validity of this defence of capital punishment from the Sacred Scriptures, though, in our judgment, less clear than that which they furnish for the lawfulness of war and slavery. But it appears that, if this single text were not found in the Bible, all reasonings from general principles of morals would leave capital punishment as much unsustained as war and slavery. Indeed it is difficult to discover the justness of any ethical reasoning which allows the use of the sword against offending citizens, but forbids its use against invading foreigners. That system of ethics which denies that civil society can change the relations subsisting between men, or justify any act which does harm to an individual, may, on the question of capital punishment, find itself in collision with the Scriptures; but if consistently developed, it will reject capital punishment and imprisonment, leave civil government powerless, and dissolve all civil society. Such is the necessary tendency of abolitionism.

#### *Benevolent Aspect.*

Abolitionism obtains advocates by an appearance of benevolence. Ambitious men could not use it for selfish and party purposes if it possessed nothing to recommend it to the masses of the people; and it is undeniable that many advocate it who are actuated by

no selfish motives, and suppose that they are advancing the interests of pure morality and the general welfare of mankind. They wish to relieve the oppressed and suffering, and the condition of slaves has been pressed on their attention as a case demanding sympathy and aid. They would gladly overthrow all tyrannical governments, and spread the blessings of republicanism and civil liberty throughout the earth; but, as they cannot break the yoke of bondage from the necks of the oppressed in the other quarters of the globe, their sympathies fix on American slavery, and they labor for its extirpation with a full belief that they are doing God service.

The most zealous advocate of slavery ought to admit that it is attended with many evils. It is as little to be desired, for its own sake, as imprisonment, capital punishment, or war; and, like these, is to be chosen only as the less of two evils. The cruelties and oppressions attributed to it have been exaggerated; but it is, nevertheless, as true that some slaves have cruel masters as that some wives have brutal husbands. And, though women may desire the matrimonial yoke, even at the risk of being oppressed, few men desire the yoke of slavery. When the alternative of slavery or death has been proposed, heroic minds have often chosen the latter. Sometimes, among the ancient Hebrews, the servant who might lawfully claim freedom said, "I love my master; I will not go out free;"<sup>1</sup> and similar cases occur among African slaves. But the general choice is of freedom; and this choice Paul seems to have approved, at least for Christian men, to whom he says: "If thou mayest be made free, use it rather." Now, since the condition of slaves is unde-

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxi. 5.



sirable, and attended with many evils, is it not benevolent to desire and seek the abolition of slavery?

Other objects equally claim the efforts of the benevolent. War is a dreadful evil. The glare of military glory may conceal its horrors; but, if stripped of this, and viewed in its nakedness, the spectacle is appalling. The field of battle, where hostile thousands meet in deadly strife—the wholesale butchery of human beings by human hands—the sufferings of the wounded which cannot be relieved or pitied—the groans and shrill outcries which cannot be heeded—and, mingling with these in dire confusion, the shouts of the combatants and the noise of their arms, as they rush onward to complete the bloody work—who that has human feeling in his heart does not sicken at the contemplation? And this is not all. The contending nations are filled with widows and orphans; trade, agriculture, and all the peaceful arts, fall into neglect; the resources are exhausted, which are needed, not only for national prosperity, but for the sustenance of the people; and virtue and religion give place to warlike passions and deeds of violence. Is it not benevolent to desire the abolition of war?

Capital punishment has its horrors. The multitudes who have been put to death by unjust and tyrannical governments, have seldom had their names recorded on the pages of history; but where heathenism and despotism prevail, the sword of the ruler has been drunk with blood. Imprisonment also has its horrors. The philanthropic Howard visited the prisons of Europe, and found in them depths of misery which had never been explored by Christian benevolence; and what imprisonment is in heathen lands may be learned from the life of Judson, the pioneer missionary of Burmah. Now, what benevolent man does not grieve over the sufferings

which capital punishment and imprisonment have multiplied in the earth? Who does not rejoice in the prospect of a happy, glorious day, in which the gallows and the prison shall be unknown?

The gospel tends in its effects to abolish imprisonment, capital punishment, war, and involuntary servitude. We know, from express prophecy, that wars will cease, and, when the people are all righteous, imprisonment and capital punishment, and with them all the coercions and restraints of civil government, will be useless. It is not so clear that all servitude will cease. The decalogue, designed by infinite wisdom to be of perpetual obligation, prescribes duties to servants; and, for aught that appears, the relation of servant, like that of child, may continue after iniquity and oppression have been banished from human society. But the servitude will not be involuntary. Even now, the gospel requires slaves to obey their masters, "*good-will* doing service;"<sup>1</sup> and when masters and servants are all righteous, this command will be universally obeyed. When all service is rendered with *good-will*, involuntary servitude will be unknown. Now, if the gospel tends, by its effects, to abolish imprisonment, capital punishment, war, and involuntary servitude, does it not follow that the abolition of all these accords with the benevolence of Christianity?

#### *Mistake.*

The mistake of abolitionists is, that they seek the benefits of enlightened virtue, without its presence and use. The gospel tends to abolish imprisonment, capital punishment, war, and involuntary servitude, by making all men righteous, and rendering these restraints of

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 7.

civil government unnecessary; but abolitionism seeks to remove the restraints, while the necessity for them still exists. It acts as one would, who, unwilling to see his sick friend, confined to bed, and dosed with nauseous drugs, commands him to reject the drugs, and rise up and walk. The gospel, by its pure morality, and its support of civil government, has effected much in healing the disorders of human society; but the cure is not completed; and it cannot be completed, without the use of the proper means. Abolitionism may command the patient to rise and walk; and may, by its unwise treatment of the case, aggravate the disease. The wisdom from above, directs to seek the end by the proper means.

The mistake of abolitionism is not one of trivial moment. The benevolence of its aspect, is the mild and gentle light of a taper, which, by being misapplied, produces explosion and ruin. If we would compute its destructive force, we must weigh all the interests which it shakes to their foundation, and threatens to destroy. Since the origin of our Federal Government, nothing has so much endangered its stability, as the slavery agitation. In this western continent, Providence seemed to have prepared for liberty, banished from the old world, a home, a permanent home, we had fondly hoped. Here, in the wilderness, the persecuted disciples of Christ found freedom to worship God. Here, the unfettered mind asserted its claim to liberty; and, under the reign of liberty, arts, sciences, and religion flourished. Love and mutual confidence bound the states of the Union in a happy confederacy; prosperity abounded; patriotism exulted; and the philanthropist saw, or thought he saw, that God was here teaching the world how to be good and happy. But the patriot and the philanthropist have been made to

tremble. A fearful earthquake has shaken the ground beneath them, and they behold, with dismay, the pillars of this beautiful Union tottering; and the beautiful fabric, the pride of their hearts and the hope of the world, falling into ruins. They have turned away their eyes, and have prayed that God may never permit them to see these states discordant and belligerent, which have been so happily united in a fraternity of peace and love. What has wrought this change? It is the slavery agitation. It is not slavery itself; for that existed at the origin of the confederacy, and continued to exist during the peaceful and prosperous times which followed. But new sentiments have arisen, which have disturbed the quiet of the nation; and for these, with all their consequences, the abolitionists are responsible. A fearful responsibility! If duty to God requires the ruin of our country, let our country fall, and the hopes of mankind perish. But if abolitionism\* is fanaticism, undermining the foundations of

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\* Since many of our northern fellow-citizens consider it opprobrious to be styled Abolitionists, I desire to say that I have nowhere employed the terms *abolitionism* and *abolitionists* for the sake of reproach, or designed to apply them to any to whom they are unwelcome or to whom they do not properly belong. Were it the aim of abolitionists merely to lessen the evils attendant on war and slavery, or to remove the causes which render war and slavery necessary, their design would be benevolent, and their efforts, if wisely directed, might accomplish good. To abolitionism thus restricted, no opprobrium could be justly due. Many persons, I doubt not, have connected themselves with Peace societies, who have not the remotest idea of denying the right of civil government to wage necessary war, or the obligation of citizens to sustain their government by the performance of military duty. It would be gross injustice to charge these persons with any ill design against order and good government. In like manner many have participated in the anti-slavery movement, whose sense of

government, and opposing the will of Heaven, may God, in his mercy, deliver us from its power.

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moral obligation would not permit them to disturb the social order of the Southern States, or to oppose those regulations of civil government which establish and protect slavery. It would be injustice to such peaceful and well-meaning persons, to charge them with anarchical abolitionism. It would be still more manifestly unjust, to fix the odium of abolitionism on those who have taken no part in the anti-slavery movement.

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